Active travel in the media:

Exploring representations of walking and cycling in UK and Scottish online news

Part of the Scottish Research Programme

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Introduction

This report is part of the Scottish Research Programme (SRP). The SRP is funded by Transport Scotland in order to gain insight and analysis of the investment in active travelling with the outcome being a better researched and more nuanced understanding of the effectiveness of interventions for walking and cycling in Scotland.

The programme as a whole helps to examine and model the scope for change and identify the most appropriate interventions. It includes research on aspects of behaviour change, analysis of infrastructure use, and examination of economic impacts. Sustrans will use these outputs with our partners to reflect on the projects we deliver, the focus for future investment in walking and cycling as well as research and insight.

About Sustrans

Sustrans is the charity making it easier for people to walk and cycle. We connect people and places, create liveable neighbourhoods, transform the school run and deliver a happier, healthier commute.

Join us on our journey. **www.sustrans.org.uk**

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Executive Summary

The media plays an important role in producing and reinforcing perceptions of active travel through shaping news and popular culture agendas. This research uses 600 articles from papers across the UK to explore the role media plays in depicting active travel in order to further understand their influence on how walking and cycling is represented, and how people who walk and cycle are portrayed to the general public. The research expands upon the small selection of existing studies, contributing significantly to understanding the Scottish media context which has not previously been explored in any great detail.

Articles were selected from a range of popular sources and hand coded. Analysis focused on four key lenses: thematic analysis, discourse analysis, sentiment analysis and visual analysis.

- The research shows that overall articles featuring walking outweigh those that are about or feature cycling by a ratio of almost 2:1 (68% to 32%).

- 'Criminal act' (136 articles) and 'safety' (110 articles) are two dominant themes , which generally report on an incident or event that has caused serious misfortune. These articles are unlikely to encourage people to walk and cycle. 'Infrastructure' is also a dominant theme (112 articles), with articles mainly related to cycling.

- Sentiment analysis: The majority of articles (61%) had a broadly negative sentiment. UK National papers have a greater percentage of positive articles about walking, whereas both the Scottish National and Scottish Regional papers have a much higher percentage of articles that are positive towards cycling.

- 'Infrastructure' and 'Health' are widely positive themes with 64.3% and 93.2% of articles providing a positive impression of active travel, respectively. 'Infrastructure' articles coded as 'negative' were not necessarily anti-walking or cycling, instead discussing poor infrastructure that need to be improved to make these areas safer, again highlighting the current danger of active travel. Health articles are mainly focussed on walking, and found in UK National media. There may be an opportunity to push health benefits of cycling in Scottish media.

- Visual analysis: The research supports the view that mobility is gendered. Of those portrayed actively walking or cycling, 50% of images contained only men, while 27% showed only women. This gap widens when looking exclusively at cycling images (63% male and 18% female). Active travel articles significantly over represent images of white individuals (96%) in comparison to BAME individuals (4%), highlighting the lack of diversity.

- The images used in the media to portray active travel make the individuals involved appear vulnerable, through the use of isolated or car-dominated locations, a 'voyeuristic' camera angle, and content such as showing only someone's feet, which makes it difficult for readers to connect and relate to the individual pictured.

Recommendations for Sustrans Media Teams

- Continue to highlight the positive aspects of active travel on their website and contribute to news sources that show active travel in a positive light.

- In order to help steer the conversation in the media away from incidents that portray active travel in a negative light, Sustrans could explore options for working with famous people, and promoting news stories in the Scottish and UK media that discuss the health benefits of cycling.

- Sustrans could explore the possibility of making a range of their images of active travel to stock photo archives and media publishers.

1. Introduction

The media plays an important role in shaping public knowledge and social norms around active travel. As a key information source for populations, the media can reflect and reinforce certain social and cultural ideas, thereby influencing how audiences experience and interpret the world around them. For example, the news media function as gatekeepers of public conversation – or what is deemed "normal" in society - which filter out information deemed unworthy for inclusion in social or political discussions. This serves as an important method for aligning broader social values with the media organisations' "news values" – that is, the categories into which issues or events must fit in order to be considered newsworthy (see Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Harcup and O'Neill, 2016). In addition, the news media can function to set the primary social and political agendas, and so prioritise certain issues or events over others (McCombs, 2014; Macmillan et al. 2016). Moreover, the news media can frame particular issues and events in such ways that certain aspects are augmented over others (see Entman, 1993)/ Consequently, events or issues may be predominantly discussed in ways that preclude alternative interpretations and explanations. The news media play a vital role in determining not only how stories about issues and events are reported, but also whose stories are deemed newsworthy and, conversely, whose stories are not considered newsworthy. The contribution of the media to shaping how people, things and concepts are interpreted and understood becomes particularly significant when the media's relationships to structures of political and commercial power are considered (McChesney 2008).

While it is important not to overstate the power of the media, it is clear that the media plays a role in determining how walking and cycling is framed within popular discourse, how people who walk and cycle are represented, and how people who walk and cycle are viewed and imagined by others. Consequently, media reporting of active travel – walking and cycling - may influence whether some people choose to take it up, and the extent to which they incorporate it into their everyday lives. This highlights a need to understand the media's portrayal of active travel.

This report summarises research conducted by Sustrans with social insight agency and media experts The Answer into how active travel is portrayed in the media. The research focuses on 15 key online news platforms from Scotland and the wider UK between March 2017 and March 2018. In particular we were interested in the types of article written about active travel, whether these articles portrayed active travel positively or negatively, who was portrayed in these articles, and how these findings varied across media outlet, geography, and over a given period of time.

In doing this, we are able to gain a better understanding of media representations of active travel in the UK, more specifically in Scotland, and how this may shape public opinion and imaginations of walking and cycling. This will allow Sustrans and other advocates for active travel to be better positioned to target interventions, promote active travel and influence policy and public opinion to enable more people to make sustainable travel choices in their everyday lives.

Figure 1 The media can play a key role in determining how walking and cycling are perceived. Article in *The Guardian* asking if the media portrayal of cycling is fair (Walker, 2017)

1.1 Why online news media?

We have focused on online news media because:

- It is increasingly the way in which UK audiences consume news

- In a world of "fake news" there is higher trust in traditional news titles

- Traditional media outlets are key at setting agendas and focusing public interest on particular subjects

The way the public receives news is changing. It has diversified significantly over the past few decades particularly with the advent of the internet and social media. People in the UK are getting their news from a range of sources. This research explores the online platforms of 15 news media outlets. These outlets are 14 "traditional" newspaper titles[1] and the *BBC News* website. The decision to focus on these news sources were threefold:

It is increasingly the way in which UK audiences consume news

While TV remains the most popular way in which Britons receive their news, online news sources are rapidly growing. According to recent figures, in 2016 48% of the public receive their news through internet sources, up from 32% in 2013 (Chart 1-1). Over the same period, the percentage of people consuming news through TV, radio and printed newspapers have all decreased. These trends are expected to continue (OFCOM, 2017).

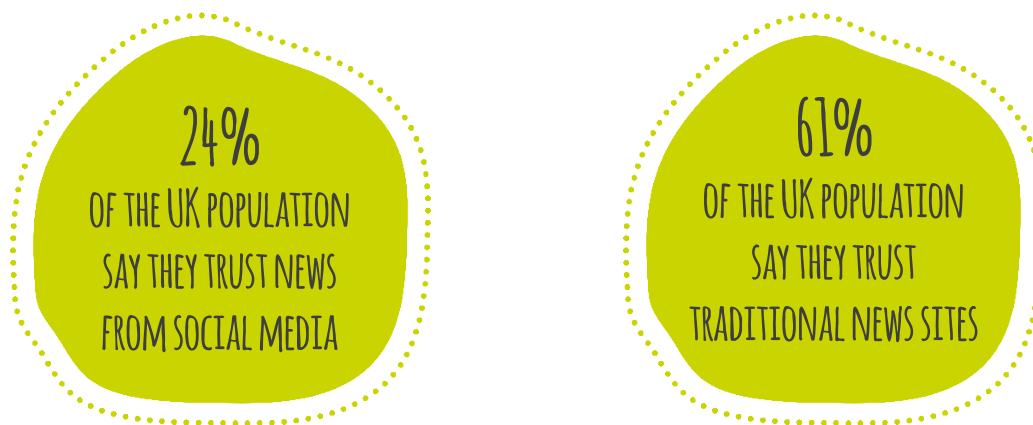**Chart 1-1: How UK adults consume news (OFCOM, 2017)**

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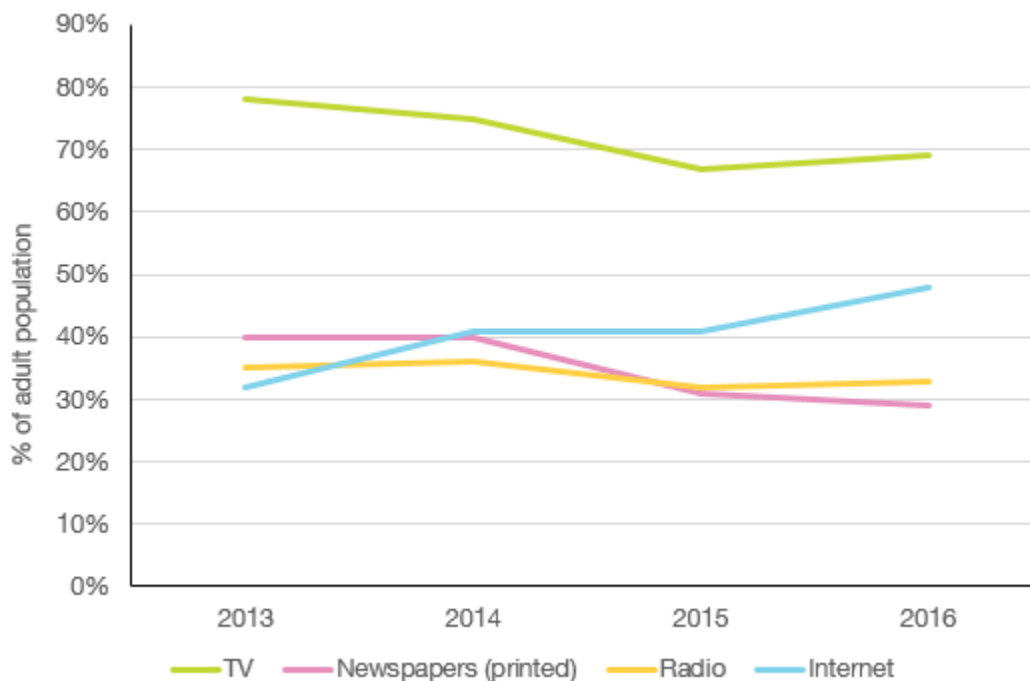
1. "Traditional" newspaper outlets are defined as newspapers that have a print presence (or historically have, such as *The Independent*), along with their online platforms.

In a world of "fake news", there is higher trust in traditional media titles

The internet has diversified the media, allowing many voices to be heard and different news sources to become available. While people have started to receive news from multiple sources, including social media, these sources are not consumed uncritically – and indeed, the impact of social media on shaping public opinion may be overstated. Trust in traditional media has remained relatively high in a world characterised by click-bait and fake news.

According to the Edelman trust barometer there is currently a very low trust in social media news sources, with less than a quarter of the UK population (24%) stating that they trust social media, and over half (53%) stating that they worry about being exposed to fake news on these platforms. While it is important to stress that different people have different ideas as to what constitutes fake news, online media platforms that have a print or TV presence are trusted by a higher proportion of people overall in the UK. In 2016, 61% of the UK population said they trusted traditional media outlets - defined as broadcasters and publishers – a 13-point increase on the previous year (Edelman, 2018)[2].

As such, while people are getting their information from a range of online sources, they tend to trust and consume sources that also have a print or television media presence. In short, the traditional media titles still matter.

24%
OF THE UK POPULATION SAY THEY TRUST NEWS FROM SOCIAL MEDIA

61%
OF THE UK POPULATION SAY THEY TRUST TRADITIONAL NEWS SITES

Traditional media outlets are key at setting agendas and focusing public interest on particular subjects

According to academics Happer and Philo, the mainstream media continues to play a central role in communicating to the public what is happening in the world (Happer and Philo, 2013). It can frame issues in certain ways, forefront particular topics, as well as removing certain issues and viewpoints from public discussion. Amongst speculation of traditional media's demise, these sources are still widely used as reference points for rival media organisation, while "heavyweight" news shows continue to refer to the traditional media and their journalists to gauge "the mood" of the press (Figure 2; see also Cushion et al, 2018). Media coverage of a subject can shift political debate and even influence the introduction of new legislation, as has been argued in the wake of the Charlie Alliston trial (see Section 1.4). This ability to set government agendas and focus public interest on particular subjects, gives the mainstream media an authority that social media sources do not have.

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2. It is important to also note here that trust in the media is not universal. For example, younger people are less likely to trust traditional media outlets. Furthermore, different publications have different levels of trust. There is high trust in publications such as *the BBC* (79%) and *The Guardian* (50%) compared with *The Mail* (30%) and *The Mirror* (24%). However, importantly, there is higher trust in these publications by those that consume these publications. For further detail see Pew Research Centre (2018).

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1.2 News values

- Reporting of active travel is shaped by journalistic conventions

All news media content, including coverage of active travel, is subject to a series of journalistic conventions and practices. A range of academic research has explored this.

For example, Norwegian academics John Galtung and Mari Ruge's seminal 1965 study determined that issues and events need to conform to pre-established "news values" in order for them to be considered newsworthy and form part of journalistic content. These news values include, among others, unexpectedness, threshold (that is, stories with a greater impact), negativity (that is, bad news, which is more newsworthy than good news) and stories that can be personalised (Galtung and Ruge, 1965). In addition, they identify stories to which audiences can more easily relate because of cultural proximity. To these values, Harcup and O'Neill (2016) add, among others, the categories of celebrity, entertainment and agenda (that is, stories that are consistent with the outlets overarching political agenda).

Issues or events that are selected to be part of the news are then subject to a process of framing. To frame, according to Entman (1993, 52) is "to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described." With this in mind, we might expect to see reporting of active travel to feature in news content when it conforms to a set of news values and to be framed in a particular manner that emphasizes certain aspects of active travel over others. This raises the question of what news coverage of active travel looks like.

1.3 Literature review: what do we know about the media and active travel?

- There is a limited amount written on the subject of active travel and the media – especially walking

- The media has had a tendency to portray cycling more positively than cyclists

- "Cyclists are not normal"

- The media contributes to a fear of cycling

- The media reinforces gendered stereotypes and underrepresents women

- Representations in the media shift through time and space

There is a limited amount written on the subject of active travel and the media

UK academic Rachel Aldred has highlighted that there is a lack ofresearch concerning the media and public understandings of general transport issues (Aldred, 2016). Within this, there remains few studies exploring how active travel is portrayed in the media. The majority of academic research into media representations of active travel has focused on cycling and cyclists rather than walking or pedestrians. The subject of "walking" as a practice has been a key focus within social science, critical theory and philosophy (see e.g. Cresswell, 2010; Gross, 2009; Solnit, 2000). However, there is limited work that explores walking as a form of 'active travel', how this is portrayed within the media and the impact this has. Other forms of active travel, such as scooting or jogging, and their representations within the media have had little engagement from academia. Because of this, the following section explores research into how cycling and cyclists have been represented within the media, rather than active travel more broadly. Importantly for the context of this study, representations of active travel within the Scottish media has had little engagement from academia.

The media has had a tendency to portray cycling more positively than cyclists

There have been a number of studies that have highlighted that media coverage of cycling, more specifically cyclists, has been generally negative and likely to instil a perception of cycling as an exclusive and dangerous activity (e.g. Horton, 2007, Rissel et al, 2010; English and Salmon, 2016; Macmillan et al, 2016; Culver, 2018). However, as discussed below, it is important to note that media representations are not fixed and can change. One of the key studies on representations of cycling in the media was conducted by Chris Rissel and colleagues in Australia. They explored shifting portrayals of cycling within Australian newspapers in Melbourne and Sydney (Rissel et al 2010). This study examined four metropolitan newspapers in the two cities over a 10 year period, exploring whether cycling was portrayed positively or negatively. The key findings to emerge from this was that there was a disconnect between the portrayal of 'cycling' and 'cyclists'. Whereas 'cycling' was more likely to be portrayed positively, 'cyclists' were more likely to be portrayed negatively. Within this report, we seek to explore whether these findings transfer to a UK setting.

Figure 2 Stills from the film "*The 40 Year Old Virgin*" and "*Napoleon Dynamite*". According to academic Zach Furness, this "oddness" is a typical representation of cyclists in popular culture

"Cyclists are not normal"

Part of the negativity around cyclists (as opposed to 'cycling') is the result of a process of "othering"[3] and perception of cycling as an unusual activity. As UK sociologist David Horton argues, within the UK press, cyclists are regarded as a "breed apart", with regular articles expressing hostility towards a stereotypical cyclist – typified as the "lycra lout" or "mamil" – a middle aged, aggressive, white male dressed in cycle specific clothing. It is argued that these representations potentially make it difficult for those interested in cycling to identify with it, excluding large swathes of the population from feeling that cycling is something for them (Horton, 2007).

US-based academic Zach Furness's (2010) work on mass media and the representation of cycling goes some way to explaining this. In a chapter of his book 'One less car: Bicycling and the politics of automobility', Furness explores how in popular culture (predominantly in the US but also within the UK) cycling is often portrayed as a pastime undertaken by "forty year old virgins, social misfits, anti-car fanatics and childish adults" (Furness, 2010: 139; see also Portrayal of Cyclists in American Popular Culture[4] and Bicycle in Popular Culture[5]). Drawing on a range of sources, including Hollywood movies, popular television programmes, satirical writing and newspaper opinion columns, he argues that adult cyclists are overwhelmingly represented to be social nonconformists, outside of 'normal' society – a society that reveres and normalises use of the motorised cars (Figure 2). As well as being almost exclusively male (see below), cyclists are portrayed as emasculated and "odd".

> *"Without a car, it is presumed that men on bicycles are incapable of adequately performing their masculinity … thereby running the risk of becoming toy-collecting eccentrics, thirty-year-old paperboys, or forty-year-old virgins"* (Furness, 2010: 113).

This idea that cycling is not 'normal' – particularly in comparison to cars – is one that has been explored by other researchers investigating a range of media sources, including public safety announcements (Nielson and Bonham, 2015), celebrity tweets (Fuller, 2017) and historic cycle campaign material (Parsons and Vigar, 2017).

Media outputs representing cycling as outside of normality combine with a longstanding tradition within newspapers and other media that perpetrates the cyclist as 'deviant' and cycling as 'dangerous' (Horton, 2007; Golbuff, 2014).

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3. Othering, in this context, refers to the process of perceiving and portraying a group or an activity as fundamentally different from oneself.
4. https://lookinginthepopularculturemirror.wordpress.com/2014/05/31/portrayal-of-cyclists-in-american-popular-culture/
5. http://bicycleinpopularculture.blogspot.co.uk/

The media contributes to a fear of cycling

As well as portraying cycling as abnormal, the media also represents cycling as unsafe and, in the process, it is argued that this puts people off starting to cycle (Macmillan et al. 2016). This also combines with media portrayals of cyclists as a threat to people. In particular the idea of the cyclist as an aggressive male character, the "lycra lout", is a key trope used by (sections of) the media to ostracise, generalise and demonise cyclists (Horton, 2007; see Figure 3).

Another key way in which, it is argued, the media may promote a fear of cycling is through public safety campaigns around cycling. While these campaigns are designed to improve safety for cyclists, David Horton (2007) argues that through highlighting (and even exaggerating) the dangers associated with cycling, they inadvertently put people off participating. The emphasis on safety – one which many media outlets focus on when reporting both walking and cycling – also reinforces the normality of the car and, by extension, the idea that cycling is neither safe nor normal. As Greg Culver (2017) argues, in light of this, policy makers are less likely to make infrastructure improvements for cycling and as such not only reduce participation, but also hamper efforts to actually improve bicycle safety.

Mirror NEWS ▾ POLITICS SPORT ▾ FOOTBALL CELEBS TV FILM WEIRD NEWS TECH MONEY TRAVEL ▾ FASHION MU

Ⓜ News › UK News › Road rage

Furious cyclist throws his own bike at woman's windscreen in heated row as she travels to hospital

Tracey Leng had been on her way to visit her ill mother in hospital for Mother's Day when she became involved in the row with the cyclist
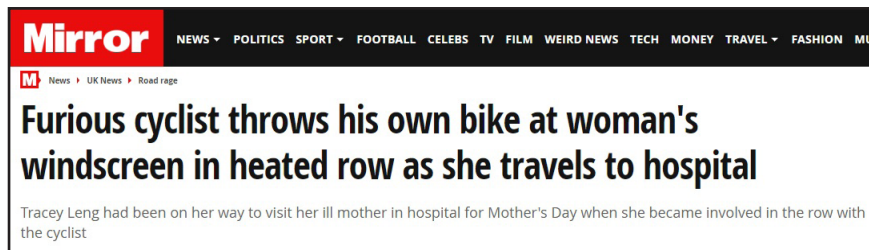
Figure 3 The angry, aggressive cyclist trope: Headline from *Daily Mirror* article 27/03/17. Importantly, this article focuses on the cyclist's behaviour, rather than the factors contributing towards this reaction. *Daily Mirror, 27/03/17: https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/furious-cyclist-throws-bike-womans-10108913*

The media reinforces gendered stereotypes and underrepresents women

While there is limited research around the portrayal of women participating in cycling in the mainstream media, research and discussions have highlighted how women are portrayed in (and often excluded from) cycling media. It is stark that the media representations of cyclists cited above almost exclusively focus on men. According to much of the above research, women are largely absent from representations of cyclists.

In their work on gendered representations within mountain bike magazines, Huybers-Withers and Livingston (2010) argue that due to a high proportion of male readers, there is little space in the magazine dedicated to women or women's cycling products. This reinforces the idea that mountain biking is predominantly a male practice. This creates a 'Catch 22' situation in which women do not purchase the magazine because there are few features or products for them, and thus the magazine does not feature women or women's cycling products because their readership is so predominantly male.

Although not academic research, in a review of a panel discussion on the topic of "Women's Representation in the Cycling Media", journalist Laura Laker (2016) highlights how much of the cycling media either sidelines women, excludes them completely, or portrays them through an overtly male gaze, often using highly sexualised or sexist imagery. Similarly, the common opinion pieces that portray cyclists as "entitled middle class white men riding with aggressive disdain for everyone" further alienate women (Laker, 2016). This, she argues, is likely to put off many women from taking up cycling – it is simply not regularly portrayed as a practice in which women participate.

Representations can vary in different contexts

Research has also emphasised that cycling and cyclists have different meanings for different groups. For example, US-based academic Melody Hoffman's study into cycling, race and gentrification highlights how cycling can be constructed as a 'white pastime' and cycling and its infrastructure represents and embodies the displacement of residents and shift in communities and places (Hoffman, 2014; see also Garrard, 2015). Similarly, Wild et al's (2017) study into opposition to cycling infrastructure highlights that as well as anti-gentrification opposition, groups commonly opposed to cycle infrastructure also include small businesses, conservative groups and marginalised cyclists. The representation of cyclists, cycling and related infrastructure for these groups, while all negative, have different meanings.

Furthermore, as Chris Rissel et al's (2010) paper highlights that increased levels of cycling might impact positively on media coverage. In their comparison of Melbourne and Sydney-based media, cycling in the Melbourne-based papers was more likely to be portrayed as positive and had a greater increase in positive articles over the 10 year period. This coincided with an increase of people cycling in the city, whilst levels in Sydney remained static.

This final point is important for this project as we consider the specific context of cycling (and active travel more broadly) in the media in Scotland, particularly in the wake of increased spending on cycling (and walking) infrastructure.

1.4 Views on how cycling is represented in the media

- Some pro-cycling commentators are concerned by cycling's portrayal in the media

- This has been linked to the Charlie Alliston trial, as well as wider issues

In the wake of the Charlie Alliston trial (see Appendix D) a number of cycling commentator's highlighted their concerns about the ways in which the media covered this case, particularly the ways in which cyclists were portrayed. Three points that were particularly emphasised by Guardian journalist Peter Walker (2017a) were that:

- The scale of the coverage of the incident and subsequent trial was hugely disproportionate compared with similar incidents involving motor vehicles and pedestrians/cyclists

- Media coverage tended to insinuate that cyclists broke laws more regularly than other road users, despite no evidence existing to support this

- Media coverage widely called for tougher laws on cyclists, including new laws for dangerous cycling and mandatory helmets

In short, there is a tendency towards vilifying cyclists as a group. According to Walker, and other commentators such as Richard Windsor (2017) writing in Cycling Weekly, this has some key potential consequences:

- It increases the likelihood of conflict on the road, as one group of road users are represented as homogenous and pitted as being against another.

- The lack of reporting of the deaths of people on bikes in comparison with the coverage of pedestrians killed by people on bikes sends a message that the lives of people on bikes are somehow less important.

- As a result of these first two points, potential cyclists are more likely to be put off from taking up cycling, either recreationally or as a form of transport.

- It is important to acknowledge that it also serves to instil a sense of fear of people on bikes to those on foot (see also Horton, 2007).
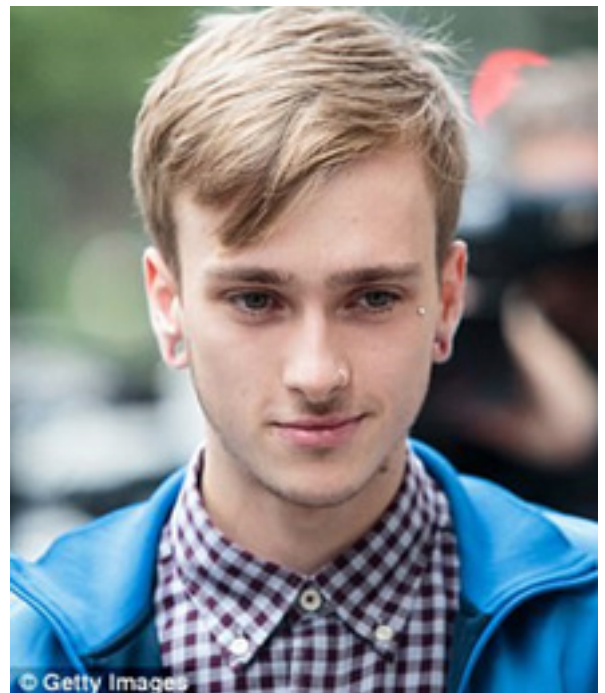

Figure 4 Charlie Alliston (above) was charged with killing Kim Briggs in 2017 through "wanton and furious driving" on his bike. In the wake of his trial several cycling commentators expressed concern about anti-cyclist bias in the mainstream media (below). *Image: Getty images via the Mail Online. Article: Windsor (2017)*

Cycling WEEKLY

Home / News / Comment

The media coverage of the Charlie Alliston case should be disturbing for cyclists everywhere

Richard Windsor
August 25, 2017 7:57 pm

215 shares

Comment: Why cyclists should be worried about the unprecedented media coverage of the Charlie Alliston case

Critiques of the way in which cycling is portrayed in the media is not just related to the Charlie Alliston case. Once again, Guardian journalist Peter Walker has highlighted this, calling out a number of key media articles and sources for anti-cycling bias. For example, in a 2015 article, Walker highlights three examples where the BBC hosted particularly one-sided debates around increased regulation of cycling – taking a test, having insurance, and being banned from cities – despite little evidence to prove that these measures improve people's safety, or any of these measures being considered as serious policy options. Rather, as Walker argues, cycling is reduced to "controversial talking points" rather than taken either seriously or talked about sensibly (Walker, 2015).

In another article, Walker highlights some of the typical ways in which commentators in the media (mis) represent cyclists. These include: making sweeping generalisations about "all cyclists" based on single incidents; defining cyclists by their mode of transport – in particular criticising the term "lycra lout" (e.g. Figure 7); inferring that cyclists break the law more regularly than other road users (despite evidence to the contrary); castigating cyclists for being "morally pure" eco-warrior sorts; overestimating how many cyclists are on Britain's roads (likely to be due to journalists' location in London where there are a higher proportion of cyclists); and finally mistaking people getting angry on Twitter to people getting angry in real life (Walker, 2016).

Walker's and other's articles raise important and valid points. However, they often use a small selection of articles to make their argument – with many of these articles selected due to their overly anti-cycling sentiment. Importantly, while these authors make no claim to be representative, it is important to acknowledge that these articles may not be typical of portrayals of cycling in the media.

Figure 5 Libby Purves's (2016) *Telegraph* article castigating "Lycra Louts". *Guardian* journalist Peter Walker has critiqued such articles that often make sweeping generalisations about all cyclists based on single incidents and defining cyclists by their mode of transport.

1.5 Why this research?

In light of this, we conducted this research because:

- No-one has done a joint study exploring the portrayal in the media of active travel as a whole. Studies mostly focus on cycling, with little focusing on walking or articles that feature walking.

- Studies are limited to the UK national context, regions in England, or explore the media in other countries, notably Australia and the US. The Scottish media has not been explored in any great detail.

- Pro-cycling commentators tend to cherry-pick the most extreme anti-cycling articles to prove their point, rather than base it on a representation of articles. While these make important points about cycling's representation in the media, and "call out" the worst examples of negative (mis) representations of cycling, they do not provide a representative sample of media articles about cycling. This study seeks to have a more representative approach to walking and cycling in the media.

2. Methodology

- Research based on the hand sourcing, coding and analysis of 600 publically available articles

- News sources were selected based on popularity of print newspapers and major broadcasters covering three geographic tiers:
    - UK National
    - Scottish National
    - Scottish Regional

- Article selection was designed to be as representative as possible and weighted per tier and per month

- Articles were coded by hand. They focused on four key lenses:
    - Thematic analysis – to determine the dominance and patterns of key themes
    - Discourse analysis – to explore the representation of key phenomena
    - Sentiment analysis – to focus on whether the article was positive or negative
    - Visual analysis – to look at accompanying imagery of the article

2.1 News source and article selection

This research is based on the hand sourcing, coding and analysis of 600 publically available online news articles on the subject of active travel. These were selected to provide a broadly representative sample (rather than comprehensive selection) of common articles about active travel. In order to achieve this, Sustrans worked in partnership with media analytic specialists 'The Answer' (Appendix E).

News sources were selected to represent a balanced selection of popular news websites affiliated with print newspapers. In addition to this, *BBC News* was included as, while not a newspaper, it is the most visited news website in the UK by some margin[6]. In total, fifteen publications were selected covering three geographic tiers – UK national, Scottish national and Scottish regional, with five publications chosen from each category.

News sources were selected to represent five popular sources from each tier. These were selected based on: their Alexa website ranking, the number of hits their websites receive, their print equivalent circulation, followers on Facebook and followers on Twitter. There were some popular publications that *The Answer* were unable to access due to articles or data and information about their archives being behind paywalls. These included *The Times*, *The Scotsman* and the *Edinburgh Evening News*. As such, these publications are not included in the dataset. While these publications would have provided a broader scope to the dataset, the publications included still provide a largely representative sample of UK and Scottish media sources. There were also some UK wide publications that have a distinct presence in Scotland, although many articles are identical to the UK wide publication. For this reason, the *Scottish Sun* is included, but not the UK-wide publication, *The Sun*.

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6. According to a recent report by Pew Research Centre (2018), 92% of UK adults use this outlet at least once a week. It is also the most trusted news source in the UK, with 79% of UK adults saying they trust this source. We did explore including the Scottish broadcaster STV in the analysis but due to its low coverage on active travel articles it was omitted.

Based on the above criteria, the following publications were selected:

Sources

UK National
– BBC News
– The Guardian
– The Mail Online
– The Independent
– The Mirror

Scottish National
– The Scottish Sun
– The Herald
– The National[7]
– The Daily Record
– Press and Journal

Scottish Regional
– Aberdeen Evening Express
– The Courier
– Border Telegraph
– Glasgow Evening Times
– Argyllshire Advertiser

Articles were selected to provide a representative sample of active travel based content over the course of a year within these sources. In order to provide usable data for each tier, the 600 articles were divided into 200 per tier. The Answer then used Google Advanced Search Analytics to set parameters for search term specifics, such as the publication title, date of publication, and key terms to include and exclude. The resulting count of articles per newspaper highlighted the proportion – or weighting – that would be needed to represent each newspaper in the database (Chart 2-1).

Based on this weighting, we were able to identify for each month which type of article (specifically cycling or walking) would need to be sourced for the database for each publication. In order to source correct articles and only include articles that were 'in scope', coding rules were developed based on the project brief and some initial sample research. Every article was individually reviewed to ensure that they remained relevant to the study.

Chart 2-1 Number of articles on active travel by title
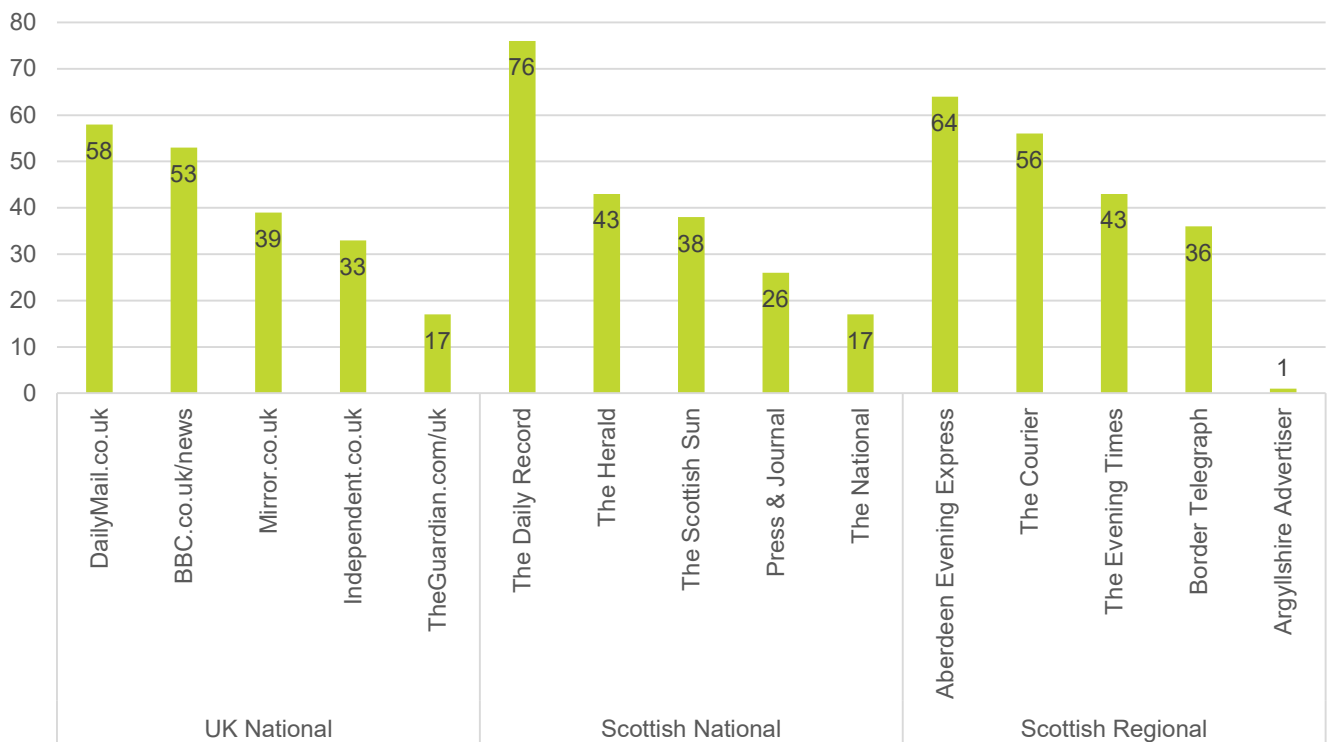
7. It should be noted that *The Herald* and *The National* are owned by the same parent company, often recycling content from each other. However, they have different audiences and editorial stances, and both have high readership. As such, they are included as separate titles. Particular attention was paid by our analysts to not include recycled material.

2.2 The coding process

All data gathering was undertaken by a trained researcher, experienced in qualitative coding and searches. Human researchers were used in favour of computer led auto-searches and coding. While this technology is improving, computer coding still has too many built-in disadvantages to be reliable for robust database building and trustworthy analysis. It remains limited in its ability to judge the kind of nuance that seems relatively straight forward to the human coder. For example, it is not able to accurately determine if an article is generally favourable towards active travel, generally unfavourable, or if the writer is using sarcasm. To accurately understand the true characteristics of a source, it was decided that it was more appropriate to approach analysis with a qualitatively trained analytical eye – exploring the nuances carefully, considering meaning, associations, tone and frequency in context.

Once the sourcing was completed the database underwent a rigorous quality control checking for articles that were not relevant to the study, using the general criteria as listed in Appendix B. Following this, articles were analysed using four key lenses on each article's content. These were:

- Thematic analysis focusing on the dominance and patterns of occurring key themes. This had a number of levels:
  1. First, articles were assessed as to whether they were about walking, cycling, or other forms of active travel.
  2. Second, whether the form of active travel was considered essential or non-essential travel.
  3. Third, the type of article was assessed from a pre-selected list based on scoping studies. These were: criminal act; road collision or incident; infrastructure; health benefits; celebrity engaged in active travel; active travel equipment; environment; humour; safety related to active travel; warning; other (see Appendix C).
  4. Fourth, the dominant theme of the article was assessed e.g. cycling as therapy, road collision, assault, robbery...
  5. Fifth, if the article had a specific target audience – beyond the expected demographic of the publication's readership – this was noted. These included categories such as 'women' and 'a local community' as well as 'witnesses of a crime'.

- Discourse analysis focusing on representation and language related to key phenomena, in doing so deriving meaning and context of the article and subject matter. This included assessing the three key words to summarise the article, e.g. "condition, depression, cycling" or "pensioner, female, theft"

- Sentiment analysis focusing on the shifts in sentiment towards active travel, ascertaining whether an article was generally positive or negative. This explored the likely intention of the article, its attitude towards the subject and the likely impression left with the reader about the subject matter. It does not necessarily correlate with whether the writer or editorial stance is pro or anti walking and/or cycling.

- Visual analysis focusing on who is being portrayed in supporting article imagery and how. This explored themes such as likely gender, age, and ethnicity of those being portrayed, as well as whether they were portrayed as being 'active' or 'passive' and whether they were wearing any specialist equipment, such as high-vis jackets or helmets. As one should not assume people's characteristics based solely on their looks, it is important to emphasise that people were categorised as the most likely gender, age and ethnicity that readers of the article would interpret them as being.

Prior to any coding taking place, the research team created a detailed codebook in order to mitigate variables and avoid sources and types of content that are not in scope. These listed the variables to be used and the specific rules that apply to the content in question (see Appendix B). As an example of the type of rules that coders used, when considering the tone of articles towards active travel, researchers assessed the way in which a story's content is constructed. This could be through the use of quotes, assertions or innuendo, as well as sarcasm or tongue in cheek statements, resulting in

supportive, negative or neutral coverage. To measure the tone, researchers tallied up all assertions that are clearly in support or opposition. Direct and indirect quotes are counted along with assertions made by journalists themselves. In order to ascertain whether an article was supportive or opposing, there needed to be at least twice as many of one kind of comment over the other.

In order to ensure reliability between coders, inter-coder tests were performed on a selection of articles and were recoded independently. Any tests in which the rate of agreement of all variables in the article fell below 80% were revisited to ascertain why this occurred. This only occurred on a minority of articles. For the vast majority of articles, inter-coder variation was significantly higher than 80%.

3. Results - Overview
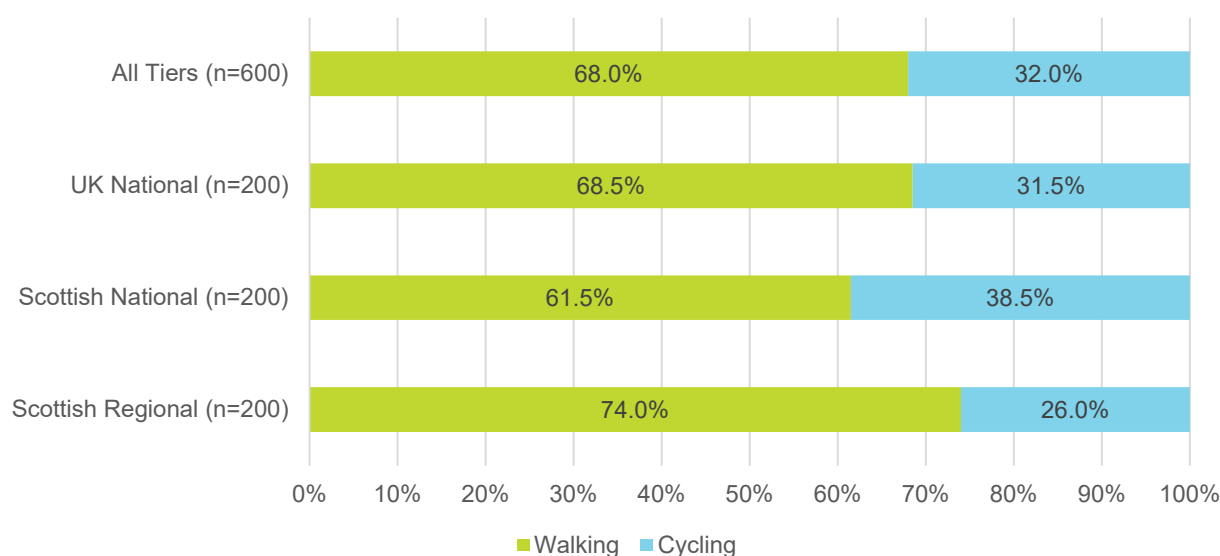
3.1 The proportion of walking and cycling articles

- Articles that feature walking outweigh articles that feature cycling by about 2 to 1
- The proportion of articles varies between publications and tiers
- Article numbers are relatively consistent throughout the year, with a slight peak in June and a dip in November and December

Overall, articles about or that feature walking outweigh those that are about or feature cycling by a ratio of almost 2 to 1 (Chart 3-1). This is hardly surprising considering that walking is a far more common form of active travel[8]. These trends are similar when broken down by tier, with a slightly higher proportion of articles on cycling in Scottish National publications and a slightly higher proportion of articles about walking in Scottish Regional sources.

Articles were taken from a number of sources, with the highest number of articles coming from the *Daily Record*, a Scottish National paper (Chart 3-2). The split between cycling and walking articles at the newspaper level varies a great deal, with the *Aberdeen Evening Express*, having 20% of their articles about cycling, and *The Scottish Sun* split evenly at 50% each.

The number of articles remains relatively consistent throughout the year, generally between 42 and 48 articles each month. However, there is a clear peak in June for both cycling and walking articles (Chart 3-3). The trends for walking and cycling articles followed a similar pattern throughout the year, with a clear peak in June, and a noticeable dip in November and December. This is likely to be on account of seasonal changes throughout the year, with more articles at the start of the summer and fewer at the start of winter.

Chart 3-1 Number of articles on active travel by tier

Tier	Walking	Cycling
All Tiers (n=600)	68.0%	32.0%
UK National (n=200)	68.5%	31.5%
Scottish National (n=200)	61.5%	38.5%
Scottish Regional (n=200)	74.0%	26.0%

■ Walking ■ Cycling

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8. In the UK 26% of trips are made on foot accounting for 3% of all journey distance, compared with 2% of trips by bike accounting for 1% of all journey distance (DfT, 2017)

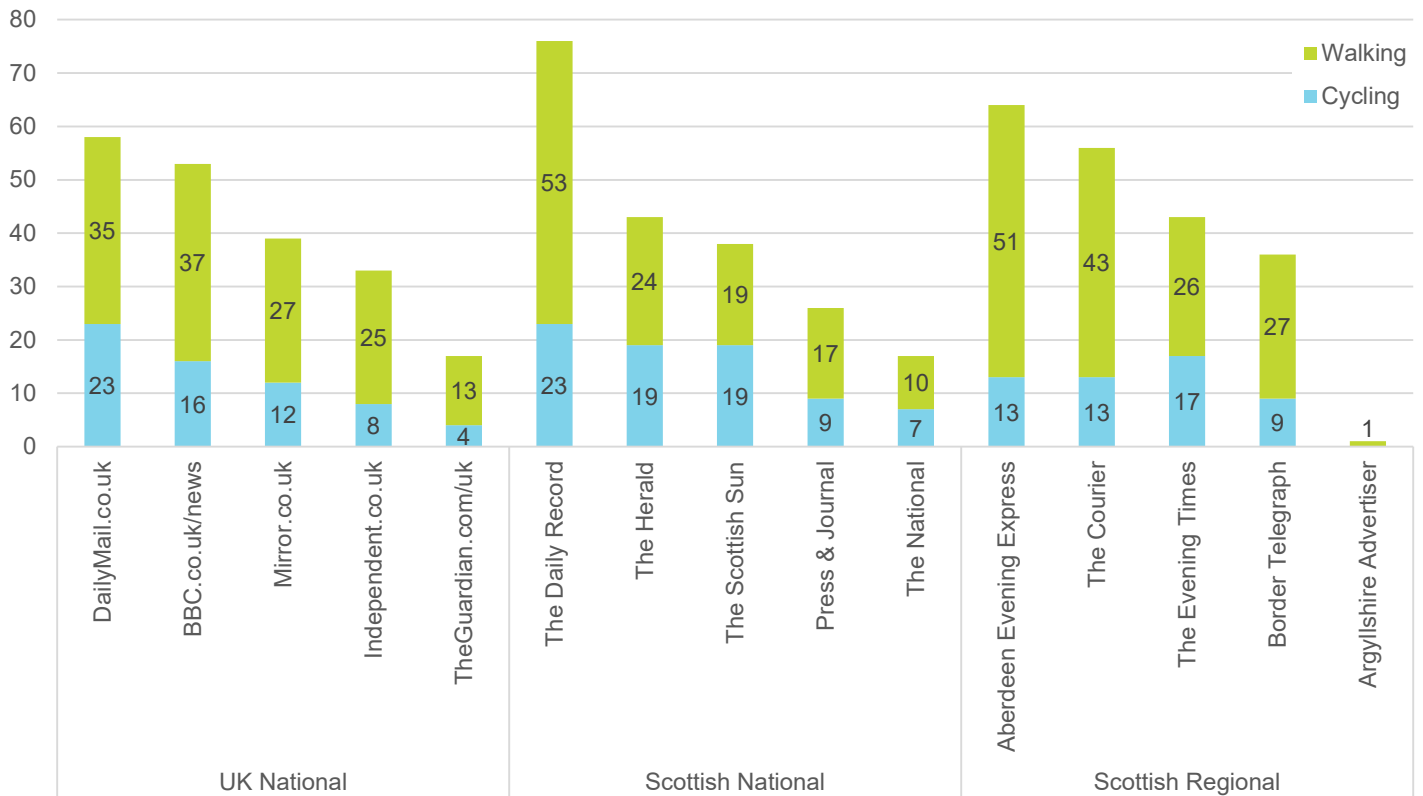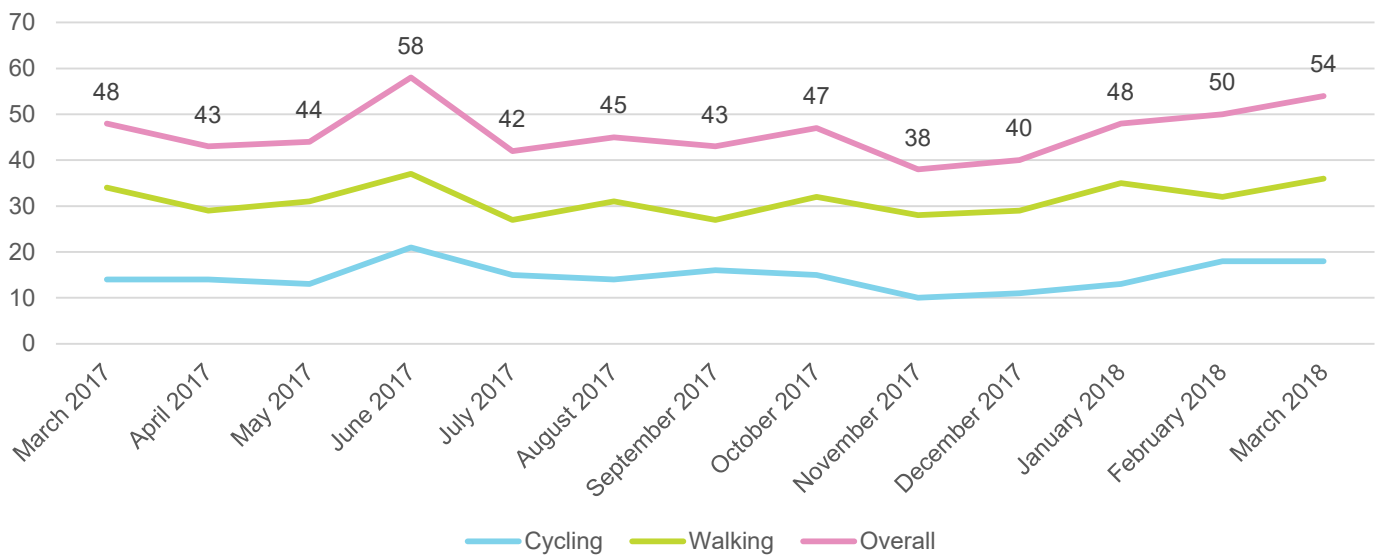## Chart 3-2 Number of articles on walking and cycling by source (weighted)

Legend: Walking, Cycling

UK National:
- DailyMail.co.uk: Cycling 23, Walking 35
- BBC.co.uk/news: Cycling 16, Walking 37
- Mirror.co.uk: Cycling 12, Walking 27
- Independent.co.uk: Cycling 8, Walking 25
- TheGuardian.com/uk: Cycling 4, Walking 13

Scottish National:
- The Daily Record: Cycling 23, Walking 53
- The Herald: Cycling 19, Walking 24
- The Scottish Sun: Cycling 19, Walking 19
- Press & Journal: Cycling 9, Walking 17
- The National: Cycling 7, Walking 10

Scottish Regional:
- Aberdeen Evening Express: Cycling 13, Walking 51
- The Courier: Cycling 13, Walking 43
- The Evening Times: Cycling 17, Walking 26
- Border Telegraph: Cycling 9, Walking 27
- Argyllshire Advertiser: 1

Chart 3-3 Number of articles over time (weighted)

Overall values:
- March 2017: 48
- April 2017: 43
- May 2017: 44
- June 2017: 58
- July 2017: 42
- August 2017: 45
- September 2017: 43
- October 2017: 47
- November 2017: 38
- December 2017: 40
- January 2018: 48
- February 2018: 50
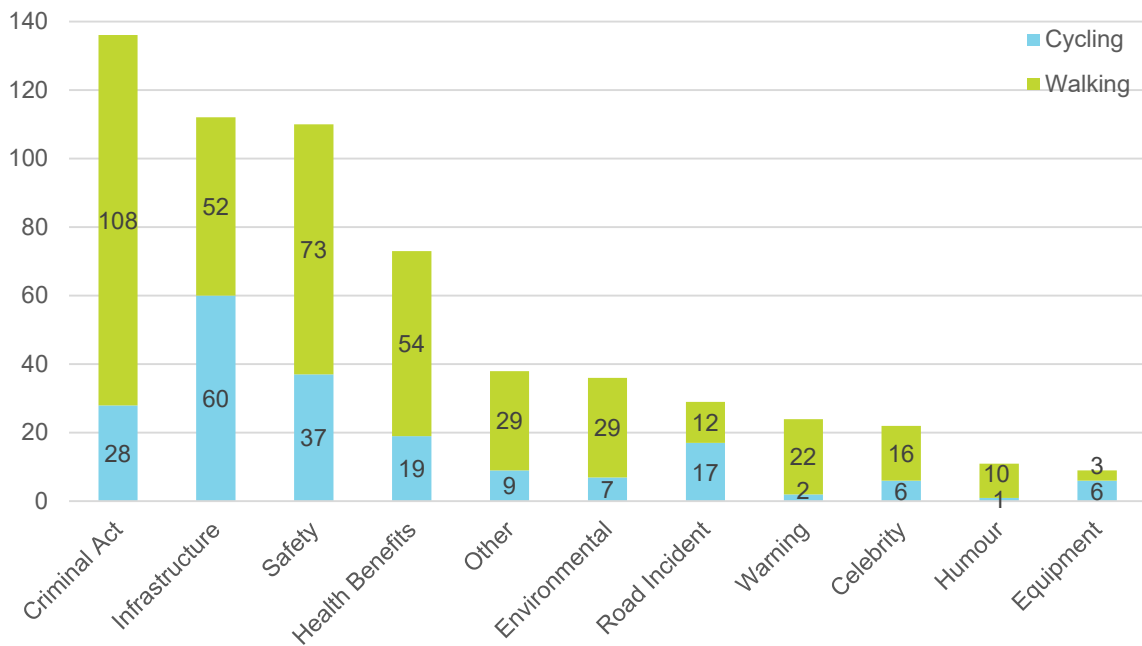- March 2018: 54

Legend: Cycling, Walking, Overall

3.2 Article themes

- The most dominant theme is "Criminal Act" which features significantly more articles featuring walking than cycling
- This is followed by "Infrastructure" which is the most dominant theme for articles featuring cycling
- "Safety" is the third most common theme followed by "Health benefits"

The most dominant theme in these articles is 'Criminal Act' which mostly occurs in articles about or featuring walking (Chart 3-4) with 136 articles. This is not surprising, as walking is such a normalised act that it is only reported when something abnormal, such as a crime, also takes place. The overlapping theme of safety is also dominant in articles that feature walking, as are health benefits and infrastructure. For cycling, the dominant theme is 'Infrastructure' (60 articles), although safety and criminal act also feature heavily.

The dominance of media reports on criminal acts and safety (or more accurately concerns about safety) for articles featuring both walking and cycling is significant. These articles generally report on an incident or event that has caused an individual or group serious misfortune. The sentiment of such articles will be explored in the following section below, however it is important to acknowledge that the proliferation of such articles is unlikely to encourage people to walk and cycle in their everyday lives.

Chart 3-4 Article themes split by mode

Legend: Cycling, Walking

Theme	Cycling	Walking
Criminal Act	28	108
Infrastructure	60	52
Safety	37	73
Health Benefits	19	54
Other	9	29
Environmental	7	29
Road Incident	17	12
Warning	2	22
Celebrity	6	16
Humour	1	10
Equipment	6	3

4. Sentiment

4.1 Sentiment of articles

- Nearly two thirds of articles are framed negatively
- Tabloid newspapers particularly negative towards active travel
- Scottish national and regional publications generally more favourable towards cycling than UK national publications
- No clear pattern of positive or negative sentiments towards active travel throughout the year
- A clear spike in negative cycling articles in September 2017 – likely to be linked to Charlie Alliston's trial

The majority of articles (61%) that mention or are about walking or cycling are generally framed negatively (Chart 4-1). Walking has a higher percentage of negative articles (63%), however, as the number of articles found for walking are more than double the number of articles related to cycling, the number of positive walking articles is still far greater than the number of positive cycling articles.

There is a slightly lower percentage of negative articles appearing in the UK National news sources (56%) and higher in the Scottish National (66%). Scottish regional papers have 61% negative articles. When broken down by individual newspapers, the highest percentage of negative articles is in the Mirror, while the newspaper with the lowest percentage of negative articles is the Independent (Chart 4-2). While there is not a clear pattern as to whether political position influences positive and negative articles, some of the outlets that have the highest proportion of negative articles are the UK and Scottish national tabloid publications. These include the Mirror, the Scottish Sun and the Daily Record, all of which have over two thirds of articles coded as negative.

Chart 4-1 Sentiment of articles

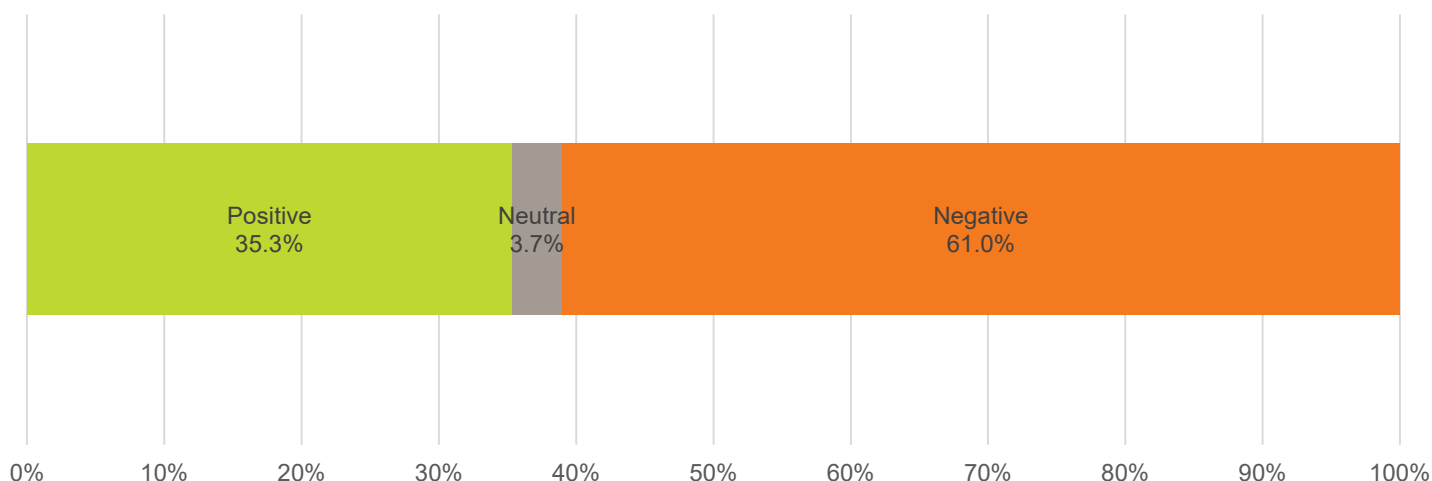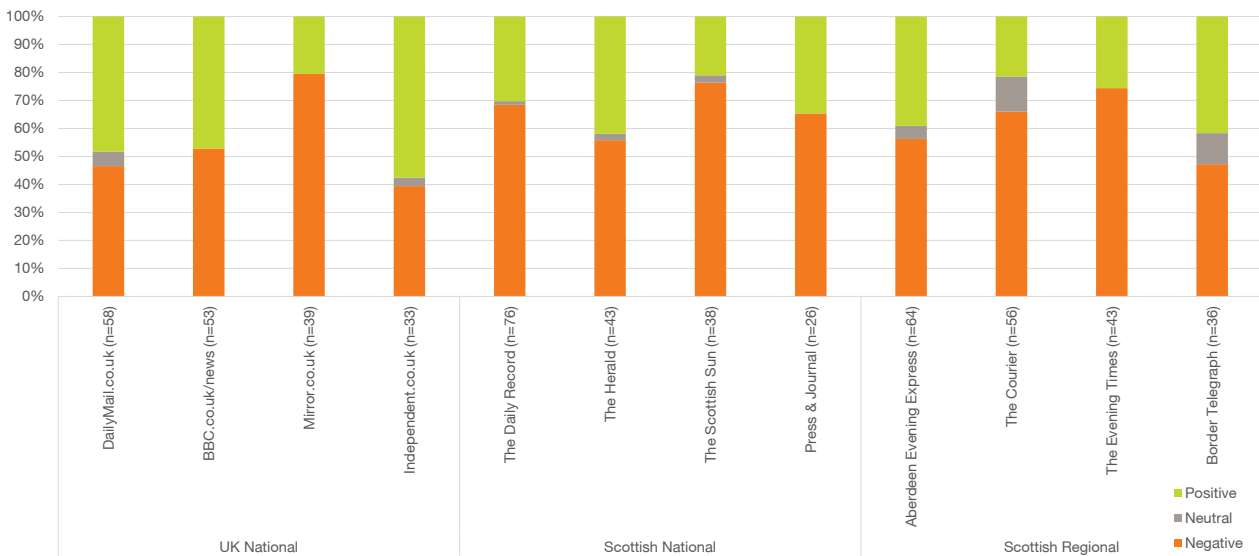Positive 35.3% Neutral 3.7% Negative 61.0%

Chart 4-2 Sentiment of articles, by newspaper (where n= 25+)

When looking at how each tier discusses cycling and walking, both the Scottish National and Scottish Regional papers have a much higher percentage of articles that are positive towards cycling (Chart 4-3). This is significant considering the added investment in cycling and the high profile of additional cycling routes in Scotland. This corroborates research conducted by Rissel et al (2010) and Macmillan et al (2016), both of whom acknowledge that the media is more likely to be positive about cycling in contexts in which cycling is backed by policies that promote it.

Of note, there is a higher percentage of negative articles on walking in the Scottish papers than in the UK National papers. Furthermore, while Scottish papers have a greater percentage of positive cycling articles, in the UK National papers there is a greater percentage of positive articles about walking. The Scottish National newspapers also have a higher number of positive cycling articles (35) than walking articles (30), despite there being a greater total number of articles related to walking (123) than cycling (77).

A time-series analysis does not give an indication of the positivity of articles being affected by the announcement in September of the Scottish Government's 'Programme for Scotland', even when broken down by tier and by mode of transport (Chart 4-3 & 4-4). This could be down to a number of factors, including that the decision to increase active travel was a reflection of public sentiment or that additional factors, beyond the announcement, has a greater impact on public and media sentiment towards walking and cycling. Indeed, there is a large spike in negative articles that feature cycling in September (Chart 4-5). This is unlikely to relate to the government's announcement, but could be linked to the outcome of the Charlie Alliston trial. This supports the argument that the reaction to this case resulted in widespread negativity and the demonising of cycling in the media.

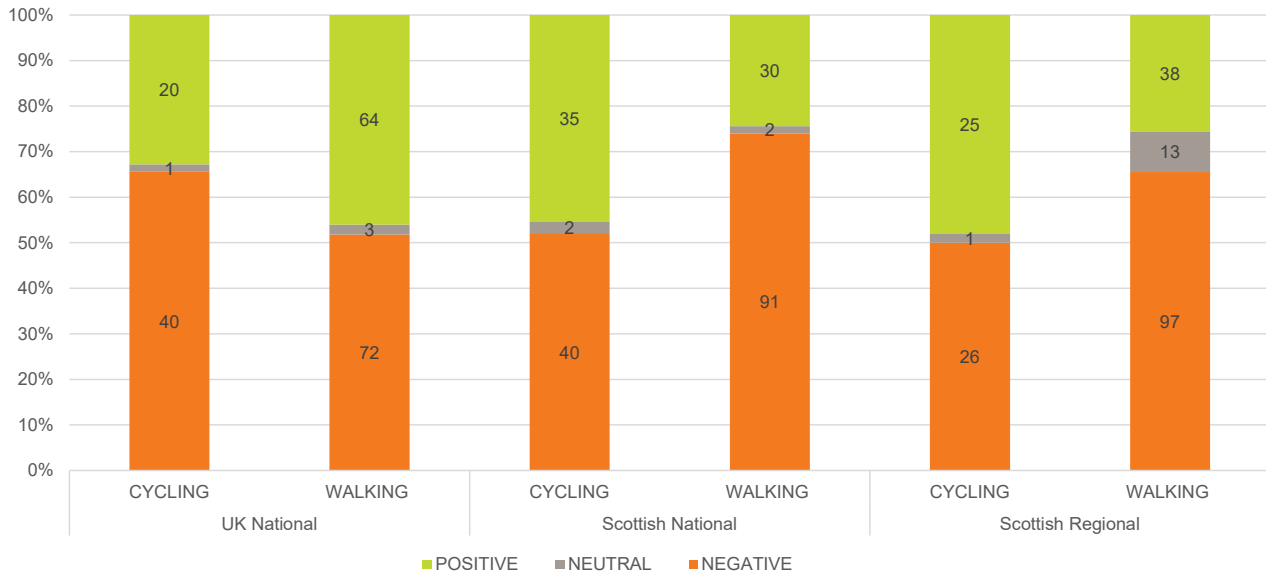## Chart 4-3 Sentiment of articles, by mode of travel and tier of newspaper

Legend: POSITIVE · NEUTRAL · NEGATIVE

UK National — CYCLING: 20 / 1 / 40; WALKING: 64 / 3 / 72
Scottish National — CYCLING: 35 / 2 / 40; WALKING: 30 / 2 / 91
Scottish Regional — CYCLING: 25 / 1 / 26; WALKING: 38 / 13 / 97

Chart 4-4 Sentiment of active travel articles over time – walking and cycling

NEGATIVE: Mar 27, Apr 26, May 26, Jun 33, Jul 24, Aug 25, Sep 29, Oct 28, Nov 21, Dec 27, Jan 31, Feb 30, Mar 39
POSITIVE: Mar 20, Apr 16, May 18, Jun 24, Jul 15, Aug 18, Sep 12, Oct 16, Nov 15, Dec 10, Jan 16, Feb 20, Mar 12

Legend: NEGATIVE · NEUTRAL · POSITIVE
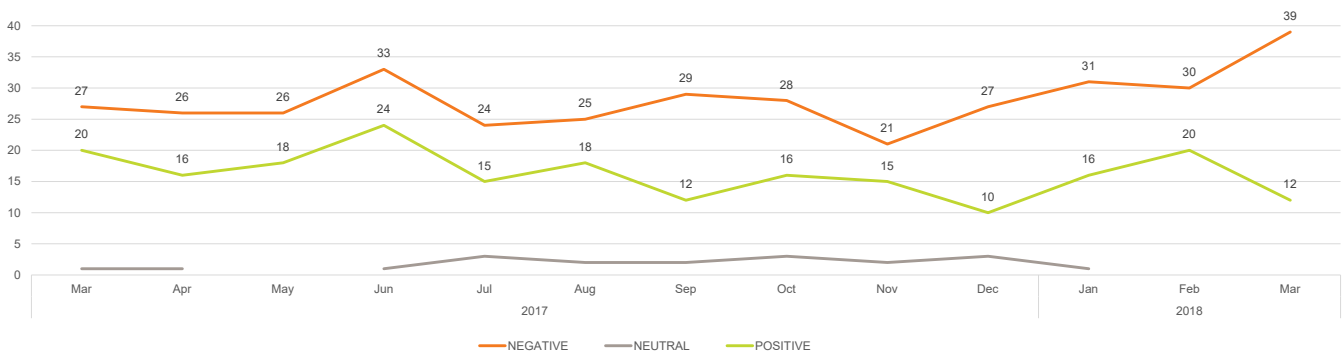
Chart 4-5 Sentiment of articles from Scottish newspapers related to cycling, on readers over time

NEGATIVE: Mar 6, Apr 4, May 6, Jun 7, Jul 3, Aug 2, Sep 10, Oct 6, Nov 2, Dec 5, Jan 4, Feb 6, Mar 6
POSITIVE: Mar 4, Apr 4, May 5, Jun 7, Jul 5, Aug 6, Sep 2, Oct 5, Nov 4, Dec 4, Jan 4, Feb 5, Mar 4
NEUTRAL: Jun 1, Jul 1, Aug 1

Legend: NEGATIVE · NEUTRAL · POSITIVE
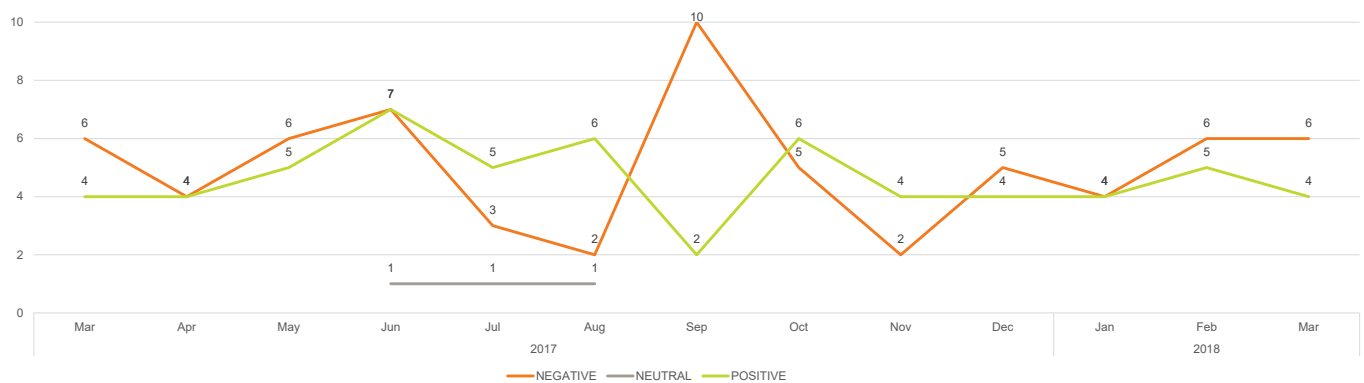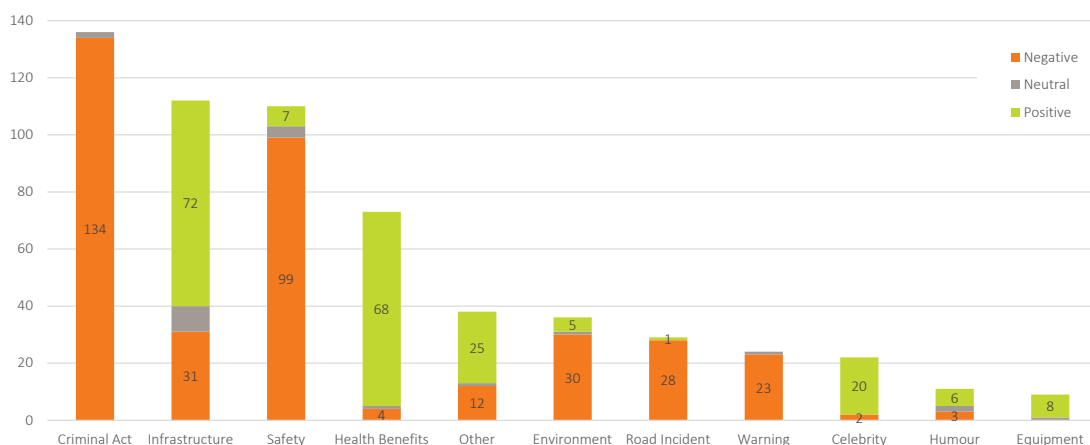
4.2 Sentiment of different themes

- The most common negative article themes are "Criminal Act" and "Safety" while "Environment", "Road Incident" and "Warning" also have high proportion of negative sentiment
- Such themes are likely to instil a negative perception of active travel, regardless of editorial stance on walking and cycling.
- Overrepresentation of articles about cycling featuring road incidents or collisions.
- "Health benefits" is the theme with the highest proportion of positive articles, while "Infrastructure" has a high number of positive articles. "Celebrity", "Humour" and "Equipment" all also have high proportion of positive articles

Articles coded under the themes of Criminal Act, Safety, Road Incident, and Warning are almost entirely negative (Chart 4-6). Such articles tend to report a specific negative event that has impacted on somebody walking or cycling. For criminal act, this often reported a crime, such as someone being mugged or attacked (Figure 6), while in safety, this is more likely to include mishaps and incidents occurring to people while out walking or cycling, or reports into the safety of these activities (Figure 7). In doing so, they focus on the risks of these activities and are likely to frame it as something dangerous and undesirable. These articles are highly unlikely to encourage people to take up active travel but are the most common types of article featuring active travel in the media – accounting for 49.8% of all articles. These themes also often overlapped. For example, some articles around safety also featured criminal acts, road incidents or collisions, but tended to be more focused on the personal safety aspect, rather than the crime or road incident itself. They also focus on danger, potentially reproducing a fear of walking and cycling (see also Horton, 2007). The fact that there is a range of predominantly negative themes is unsurprising when one considers Galtug and Ruge's "news values". News that is unexpected and negative represents particularly newsworthy subject matter (Galtug and Ruge, 1965).

Figure 6: 'Criminal Act' is the most common theme in articles discussing active travel. *Daily Record 23/01/18. https://www.dailyrecord. co.uk/news/local-news/violent-thug-battered-pensioner-who-11932245*

Chart 4-6 Sentiment of articles by theme

The fact that the most commonly themed article was 'criminal act' is important. This almost exclusively negative theme presents active travel as particularly dangerous and fear of becoming a victim of crime is key barrier to people taking up active travel. This fear has a gendered dimension and has been shown to be a key reason for more women not taking up cycling (Sustrans, 2017). This is an important aspect for Sustrans and other advocates for active travel to consider.

When exploring articles written about road incidents or collisions, there are a greater number of articles about or relating to cycling than walking (Figure 7). It is important to note that pedestrian casualties outnumber cycling casualties by a ratio of over 4 to 1 and have a higher fatality rate per billion miles travelled (DfT, 2017). The over-representation of cycling incidents is likely to portray it as more dangerous than walking, and as such is unlikely to encourage more people to take it up. Indeed, this plays into the "cycling is dangerous" trope, as described by Horton (2007), not only discouraging people from taking up cycling, but also limiting participation to those willing to take perceived risks Articles coded under the Environment theme mainly relate to physical surroundings, or localised environmental issues (Figure 8). These include 'pollution' and 'littering' as well as weather conditions, with a high number of articles focused on limited infrastructure during the "Beast from the East" and other storms during winter 2017/18. Articles coded as Environment were mostly negative (83%), largely due to how the articles portray surroundings in which people partake in active travel as unpleasant or even dangerous. In doing so, most of these articles are unlikely to encourage people to engage in active travel. The few positive articles on the theme of environment largely focus on the positive environmental outcomes from active travel, such as reduced emissions. Despite it being an important political topic, air quality was only mentioned in two environmental articles. This does not necessarily mean that these articles do not exist, but rather that they are not being widely discussed in relation to walking or cycling. Indeed, this suggests a missed opportunity to focus more on the environmental benefits of walking and cycling.

Figure 7: Articles often portray cycling as particularly unsafe. *The Independent, 17/10/17.* https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/cycle-safety-laws-new-kim-briggs-death-warning-against-witch-hunt-a7960291.html

Figure 8: 'Environment' articles discuss localised issues, such as pollution. *The Evening Times, 08/04/17.* http://www.eveningtimes.co.uk/news/15213082.Glasgow_failed_to_meet_its_own_pollution_targets/
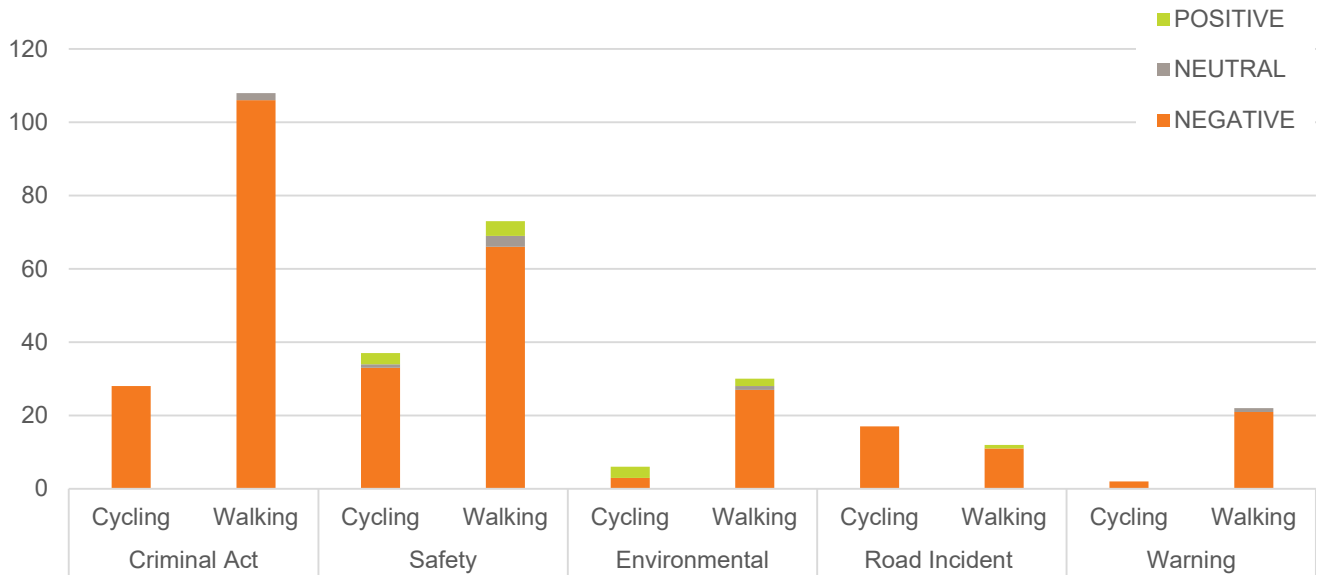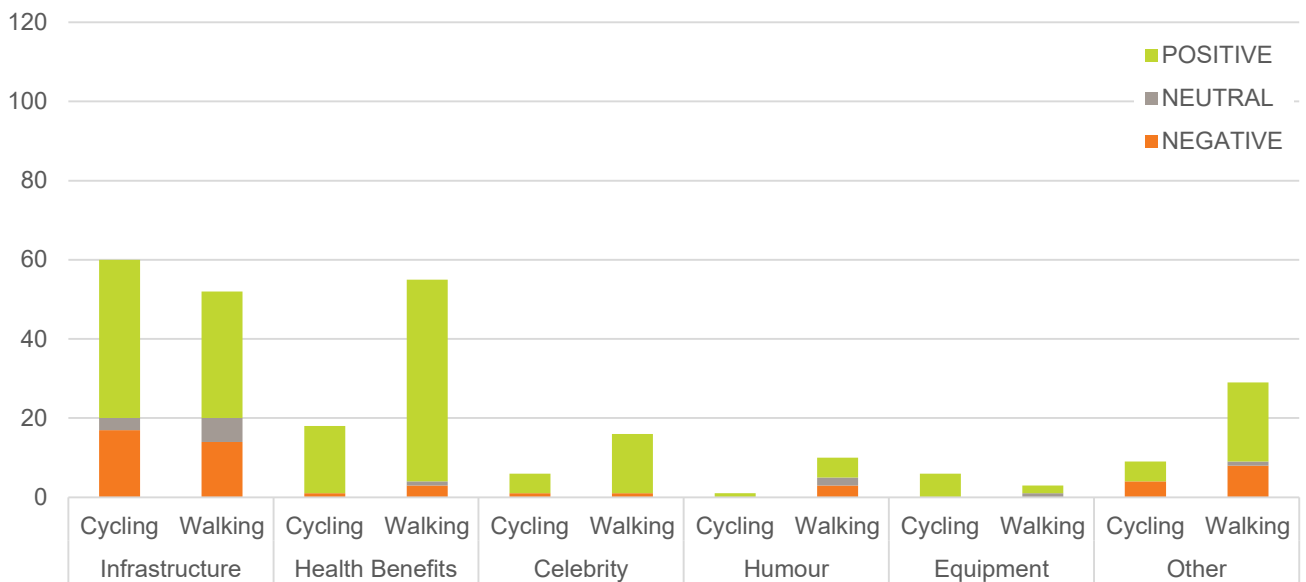
Active travel in the media:
Exploring representations of walking and cycling in UK and Scottish online news

Chart 4-7 Negative themes

Legend: POSITIVE, NEUTRAL, NEGATIVE

Categories (each with Cycling and Walking bars):
- Criminal Act
- Safety
- Environmental
- Road Incident
- Warning

Chart 4-8 Positive themes

Legend: POSITIVE, NEUTRAL, NEGATIVE

Categories (each with Cycling and Walking bars):
- Infrastructure
- Health Benefits
- Celebrity
- Humour
- Equipment
- Other

The theme that was most commonly coded as positive was infrastructure (Chart 4-8). 64.3% of these stories give a positive impression of active travel and tend to focus on improvements being made to local infrastructure (Figure 9). Again, this is in line with Galtung and Ruge's news values which highlight that issues with a higher level of unexpectedness and threshold - that is they need to have impact. In this sense, new infrastructure announcements and openings are events worthy of recording. As such, this goes some way to explaining why these events are reported on rather than, say, the slow decay of established infrastructure.

Significantly, almost 90% of infrastructure themed articles are in Scottish publications. That local publications have a greater share of the infrastructure articles is not surprising as infrastructure could be considered a local issue. However, in our database the Scottish National papers have the most articles about infrastructure (52) compared to the UK national papers which have the fewest (12). Rissel et al (2010) and Macmillan et al (2016) note that in contexts where there is improved infrastructure and more cyclists, attitudes towards cycling within the media are more positive.

It is also important to note that a number of these articles that are coded as 'negative' are not necessarily anti-walking or cycling. Many of the negative articles are discussing poor infrastructure which makes it difficult to walk or cycle. So although it is a negative article, and negative towards the current state of cycling or walking, highlighting the danger of walking or cycling in these areas, some of the negative infrastructure articles imply that changes should be made to make these areas safer. Nevertheless, through focusing on the poor state of current infrastructure, these articles are unlikely to encourage people to take up active travel, particularly those who are not confident, and further contribute to a fear of travelling actively, particularly cycling (see also Horton, 2007).

It should also be noted that some of these articles are openly hostile towards active travel, particularly cycling. For example, one article from the Daily Mail blames cycle lanes for the slow speed of traffic in Cambridge and London (Figure 10), despite widespread evidence showing that cycle lanes generally reduce or have limited impact on congestion levels (e.g. Bradley, 2017). Such articles serve to normalise cars as the default choice of transport, with the emphasis on how to make the number of cars on the road move faster, rather than reduce car numbers (see also Furness, 2010).
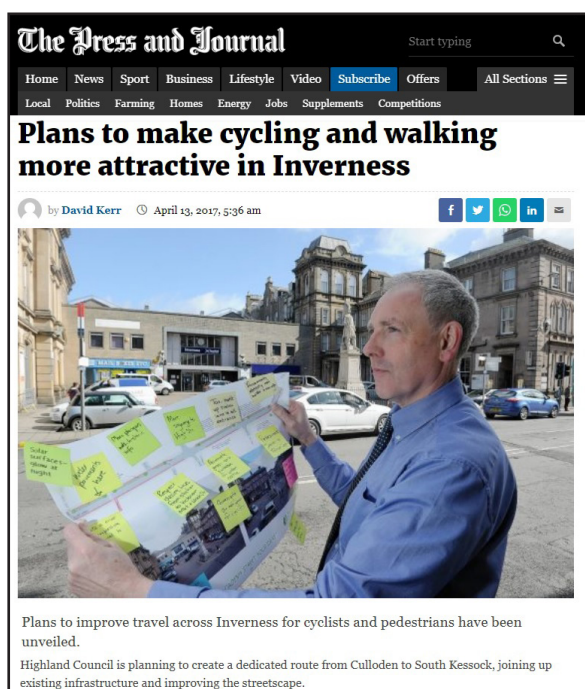

Figure 9. The majority of articles discussing infrastructure are positive. *Press & Journal, 13/04/17. https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/inverness/1219613/plans-to-make-cycling-and-walking-more-attractive-in-inverness/*

Figure 10. An example of a negative infrastructure article: Bike lanes blamed for traffic in Cambridge. *Mail Online, 12/04/17. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4403350/Bike-lanes-make-Cambridge-UK-s-slowest-city-drivers.html*
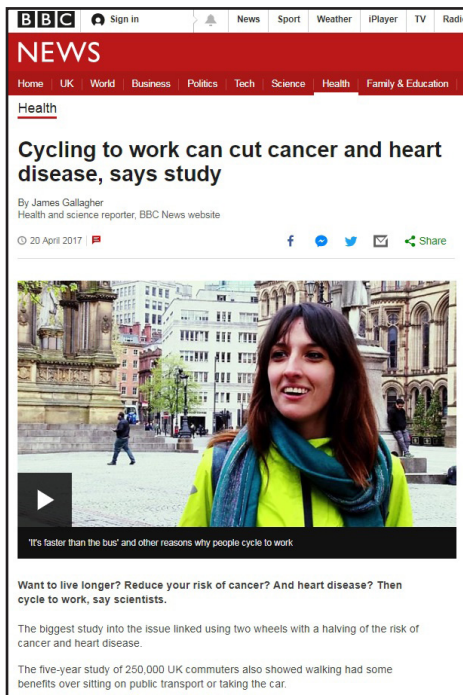
Figure 11. Health benefits of active travel. "Health" was the theme with the highest proportion of positive articles. *BBC News, 20/04/17. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-39641122*

Figure 12. Articles that discuss celebrities travelling actively are generally positive. *The Scottish Sun, 02/11/17. https://www.thescottishsun.co.uk/tvandshowbiz/1789109/x-factor-boss-simon-cowell-begins-cycling-to-work-for-new-get-fit-lifestyle-just-a-week-after-terrifying-fall-down-stairs/*

The next most common theme coded as positive was health benefits. This theme had the highest proportion of positive articles, with 93.2% of all pieces written on this theme leaving the reader with a positive impression. These articles emphasise the health benefits of active travel, from improved physical health, increased life expectancy, and better mental health and wellbeing. Articles that feature walking and cycling are similarly positive, and can be sourced from all tiers and all political spectrums. These articles are likely to encourage people to walk or cycle places, especially as a high number of these focus on active travel as part of one's everyday life (Figure 11).

Significantly the number of cycling articles is far out-weighed by the number of walking articles coded as health benefit articles. There are also a much lower proportion of articles on health in Scotland compared with the UK national media outlets. Health benefits is clearly a theme that has positive articles and there may be a missed opportunity to really push the health benefits of cycling in the media, particularly in Scotland.

Another positive theme is 'Celebrity'. These articles normally depict a famous person engaged in some form of active travel (Figure 12). While these articles are about the celebrity themselves (argued to be a key facet of newsworthyness – see Harcup and O'Neill, 2016), with the activity secondary, the very fact they are undertaking active travel helps to highlight it as a practice and thus has the potential to normalise it . This could be a useful way that Sustrans may produce positive content on active travel in the future.

Finally, other positive codes include humourous articles, which focus on bizarre events, such as people taking unusual animals for a walk, and equipment, which review products for active travel.

Comparing the sentiment of different themes highlights that certain themes are clearly more likely to portray walking and cycling as positive than others. As such, it is important to remember that it is not just what is being said about active travel that is important, but also the context within which active travel appears in the media. Indeed, a media source may not necessarily have a negative editorial line about active travel, however if they are reporting regularly about criminal acts that feature somebody walking (for example), then they are unlikely to encourage people to participate in active travel.

4.3 Sentiment of cyclist and cycling

- Cyclists are more likely to be portrayed negatively than cycling

As part of the analysis, articles had key words tagged to them. Of the 19 articles tagged with cycling, 53% of these were coded as negative and 47% positive. In comparison, of the 29 articles tagged with cyclist(s), 90% of these were coded as negative and 10% positive (Chart 4-9). While this is a low sample of articles, it is consistent with previous work (e.g. Rissel et al, 2010) that highlights that cyclists are perceived in a much more negative light than cycling.

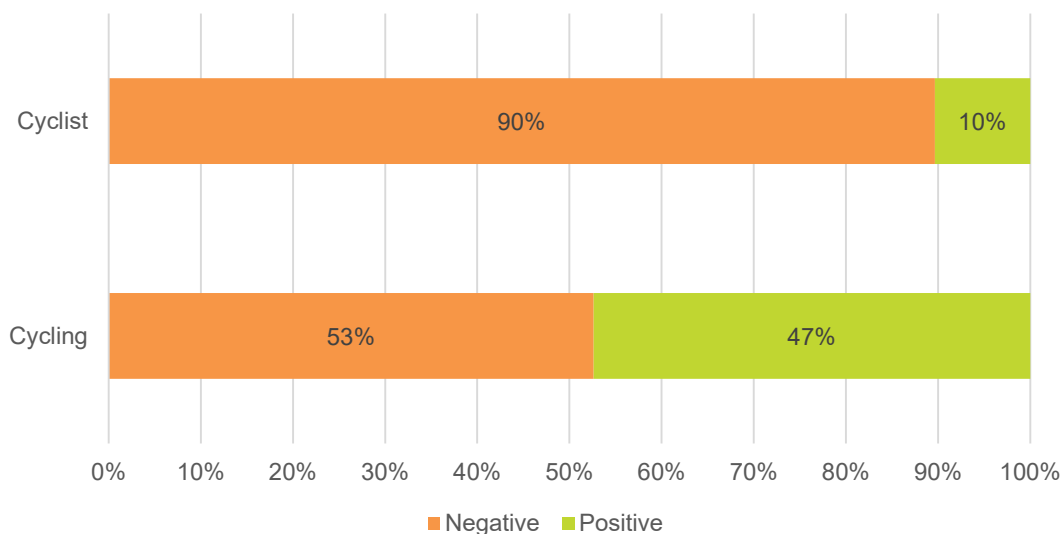**Chart 4-9 Sentiment of articles tagged as cyclist (n=29) and cycling (n=19)**

Figure 13 & 14. Articles focusing on cyclists are more likely to be negative than articles focusing on cycling. *The Scottish Sun, 20/03/18, https://www.thescottishsun.co.uk/news/2392047/judge-brands-cyclists-who-ride-on-pavement-as-potential-killers-as-he-lets-rider-who-moved-down-woman-72-outside-shop-walk-free*

The Mirror, 08/03/18, https://www.mirror.co.uk/science/cycling-can-reverse-ageing-process-12150482

Active travel in the media:
Exploring representations of walking and cycling in UK and Scottish online news

Case Study I: Dashcam videos and CCTV

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the prevalence of 'safety', 'criminal act' and 'traffic incident/collision' articles, we explored some of these in more detail. A regular occurrence in a number of these articles was the inclusion of dashcam footage and CCTV. These types of images and videos included in online media articles have become increasingly prevalent in recent years, in part because of the increased use of social media, phone, dashcam and helmet mounted cameras, as well as the greater presence and accessibility of CCTV. Furthermore, dashcam and cctv footage is also cheaper for news outlets to source.

The use of video's, whether it is car dashcams or more generally bicycle cameras create an interesting sub group of sensationalised 'caught on camera' incidents involving people cycling and people driving (e.g. Figure 15). The emphasis of these articles is generally the focus on the road rage moments, particularly on the behaviour of the person on the bike. While articles usually mention the incident that provoked the reaction, these are secondary features of the article. For example, in one 223 word article, the build up to the incident is restricted to "Tracey claims the man had turned around to berate her for veering into a cycle lane - which she insists that she did not do" with the remainder of the article focusing on the man on a bike's behaviour (Figure 16) At times, the incident that preceded the altercation is described in a jovial or dismissive manner. For example, one article describes a man cycling as being "bumped off his bike" (71), whilst another refers to a white van "swerving" towards a person on a bike in unemotive terms.

While not condoning such behaviour, there is also often no mention of other factors that contributed to the build-up of the altercation, such as a lack of or inadequate cycling infrastructure and road layouts with pinch points. Through ignoring these, the road layout is naturalised and the fact that it is a hostile environment to cyclists is portrayed as inevitable.

Such articles portray cycling in a negative light on two fronts. First, these articles portray cycling as particularly dangerous, raising a subconscious question to readers of "who would want to cycle in these conditions?" As has been established, the perceived risks of cycling are a key barrier to people taking it up (Horton, 2007). Such articles play up these risks, although it is also important to acknowledge the impact that such near misses – which happen regularly - have on the perceived risk of cycling (see Aldred & Crosweller, 2015).

Second, these articles also reinforce the narrative that cycling is only for certain demographics and situates cyclists as an outlier group. In particular, these articles portray cyclists as angry, irrational men, feeding into the "MAMIL" trope (see also Horton, 2007; Fuller, 2017). In addition to this, a number of articles use online comments and/or tweets as commentary on the article. One article (132) described the "outpouring of online condemnation of the cycling community." This perpetuates the idea that cyclists are a homogenous "community", rather than a disparate group of individuals who happen to ride bikes. This is likely to put off people who do not feel part of this "community".

The use of the grainy, unprofessional image, namely CCTV footage (Figure 17), also has important implications for the portrayal of active travel. CCTV footage and mobile phone photos from the public are often used to convey a sense of in the moment authenticity. It gives the reader a sense that they are witnessing first-hand what happened on the ground and is a useful tool for journalists to convey the story from the perspective of witnesses. Although not exclusively used to cover negative stories, such images tend to connote a "gritty reality" rather than the ideal – as is the overriding goal of journalists. Furthermore, such images – particularly those from CCTV footage - are often associated with criminal acts, and are also used by the police and security officials in appeals for witnesses or attempts to solve or prevent crimes. In doing this, such images according to media insight agency The Answer are generally perceived in a more negative light and are unlikely to portray active travel positively.

Figure 15: *Mail Online, 14/03/17, http://www. dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4313004/Cyclist-goes-ballistic-road-rage-bust-trucker.html*
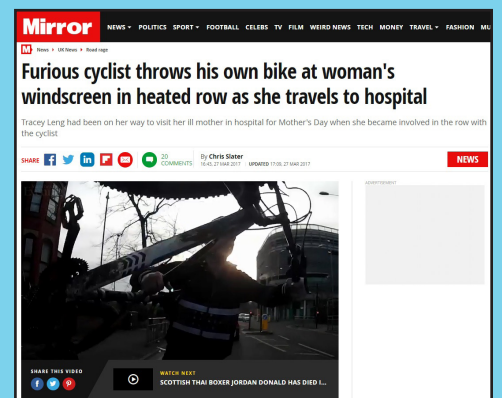

Figure 16: *The Mirror, 27/03/17, https://www. mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/furious-cyclist-throws-bike-womans-10108913*

Figure 17: *The Scottish Sun, 13/04/17, https:// www.thescottishsun.co.uk/news/866215/glasgow-knifeman-west-nile-street-video-glasgow/*

5. Who is portrayed?

- Certain groups are over represented in images of active travel while others are under represented

As well as exploring the themes and sentiments of portrayals of active travel in the media, this research has also explored who is represented as participating in active travel, and how they are represented. This has important implications for proponents of active travel, as people are more likely to take up active travel if they see others "like them" participating. This serves to normalise the activity. As Zoe Banks Gross, a Bristol-based environmentalist who campaigns for walking and cycling to be more inclusive, states, in order to get a wide range of people participating in cycling :

"People need to see images of all shapes, sizes, ages and ethnicities of people on bikes. You can't be what you can't see" (Banks Gross, 2018).

As discussed above, cycling is often portrayed as being an activity practiced by middle aged, white men – with further caveats that they are emasculated, childlike, or hyper aggressive (see Section 1.3; also Horton, 2007; Furness, 2010). The following section explores how people are represented in media articles about active travel.

Figure 18. Zoe Banks Gross, pictured cycling in Bristol, argues that we need to see a better diversity of images of people on bikes in order to encourage a wider range of people to cycle.

5.1 Gender

- Women are underrepresented and men are overrepresented in imagery of active travel
- This is more exaggerated in images of cycling than walking
- Women are also more likely to be shown as "passive" rather than "active" in images

Research has highlighted that participation in active travel, particularly cycling, is highly gendered. Cycling has been shown to be a particularly male dominated activity, whilst feminist critiques of public space argue that the public realm often excludes women through a combination of design and gendered social norms (e.g. Beebeejaun, 2016). Surveys of people cycling in Edinburgh also show that 63% are men while 37% are women (Bike Life, 2017), while in Glasgow men are three times more likely to cycle than women (Sustrans, 2018). In other cities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland men cycling consistently outnumber women by some margin (Bike Life, 2018).

Analysis of the article data set reveals that men are over-represented in media depictions of active travel. Nearly half of all articles that use images show only men (48%), whereas only a third (33%) utilise images only of women. Men and women are represented together in 20% of images. These images represent all images analysed, however, when focusing on articles that feature images of individuals in the process of actively travelling (rather than standing beside a bike, etc.), men are further overrepresented. Of the 600 articles, 166 have images that show individuals actively engaged in walking or cycling. Chart 5-1 shows the proportion of each gender represented in these images. In these images, men are over-represented further, with 50% of images exclusively depicting men. Comparatively, 27% of images feature exclusively women, while 23% depict both men and women.

When breaking down gendered representations by mode the gap between men and women widens even further for cycling, with 63% of articles featuring only men, and only 26% showing women (Chart 5-2). There is a much more even distribution when considering articles about or featuring walking, with a split of 37% for images showing only men and 43% for women.
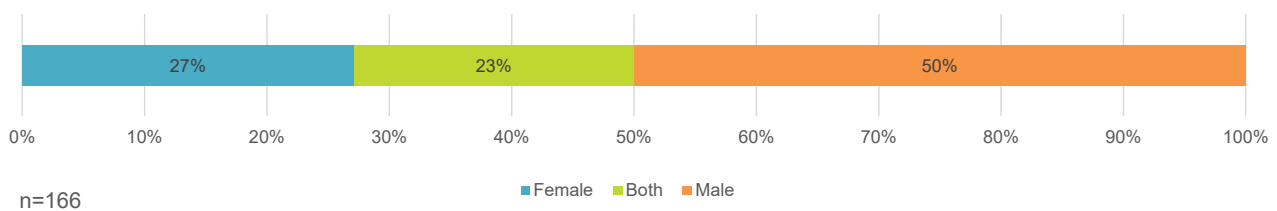
Chart 5-1 Gender of those portrayed travelling actively

Female	Both	Male
27%	23%	50%

n=166

Female ■ Both ■ Male

Chart 5-2 Article Image Use by Gender and Mode

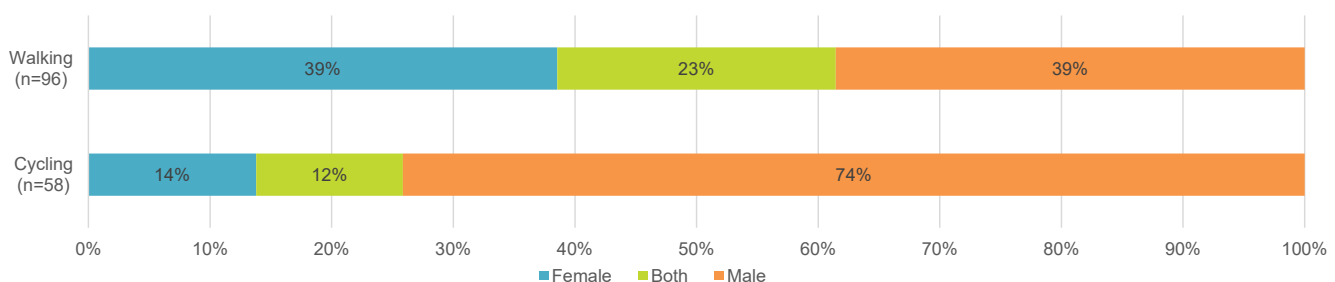|	Female	Both	Male
Walking (n=96)	39%	23%	39%
Cycling (n=58)	14%	12%	74%

Female ■ Both ■ Male

Figure 19 & 20. Men are more likely to be portrayed in cycling articles. They are also more likely to be portrayed being active than women. *Images: Daily Record, 03/05/17, https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/lifestyle/health-fitness/ commuting-work-five-reasons-cycle-10345238 ; The Courier, 11/03/17, https:// www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/lifestyle/outdoors/blazing-saddles/376570/loneliness- long-distance-cyclist/*

While both UK National and Scottish National papers reflect the over representation of men actively cycling in the use of its images (79% and 76% of articles respectively), the figure for Scottish Regional papers is lower at 50%. As a result, representation of women in Scottish regional papers is higher (50%) than the 26% highlighted in Chart 5-3, though this is certainly influenced by the low overall number of Scottish regional papers using active images of cycling (8 articles)

Furthermore, it is highlighted that the equal distribution of images of men and women in walking articles is a result of the high proportion of UK National articles using images of women only. 48% of articles use images of women in comparison to 26% and 24% of Scottish National and Scottish Regional newspapers.

When looking at the themes of articles by gender, a broader picture of how gender is represented in the media can be viewed (Chart 5-4). In articles classed as 'Safety' and 'Criminal Act' the percent of images that show only men are 64% and 62%, respectively. The theme of articles that mainly feature women include 'Environment' (56% of images showing women only) and 'Health' (41% of images show only women, compared to 38% of images showing only men). Although the total number of articles in the category is small, it is interesting to note also that images in articles classed as 'Warning', 67% of articles feature women exclusively.

When looking at the themes of articles by both mode and gender, the over representation of men in images can be viewed even further (Chart 5-5). The theme of safety for cycling reflects the over representation of men with 79% of articles (15 articles) including images of only men. Furthermore, articles associated to health benefits (6 Articles) for cycling and the theme of road accident for both cycling and walking (3 articles in total) refer only to images of men. Interestingly, whilst articles with themes associated to health benefits use only images of male for cycling, in reference to walking images of women are more predominant with 13 articles (41% Female, 34% both, 25% male). This suggests there may be a gendering of forms of active travel when considering their health benefits – men may be more likely to cycle for health reasons, while women may be more likely to walk for health reasons. It is also raised that articles associated to environmental themes predominantly utilise images of women, with the one article of cycling and 67% of walking articles (4 articles) utilising images of women.

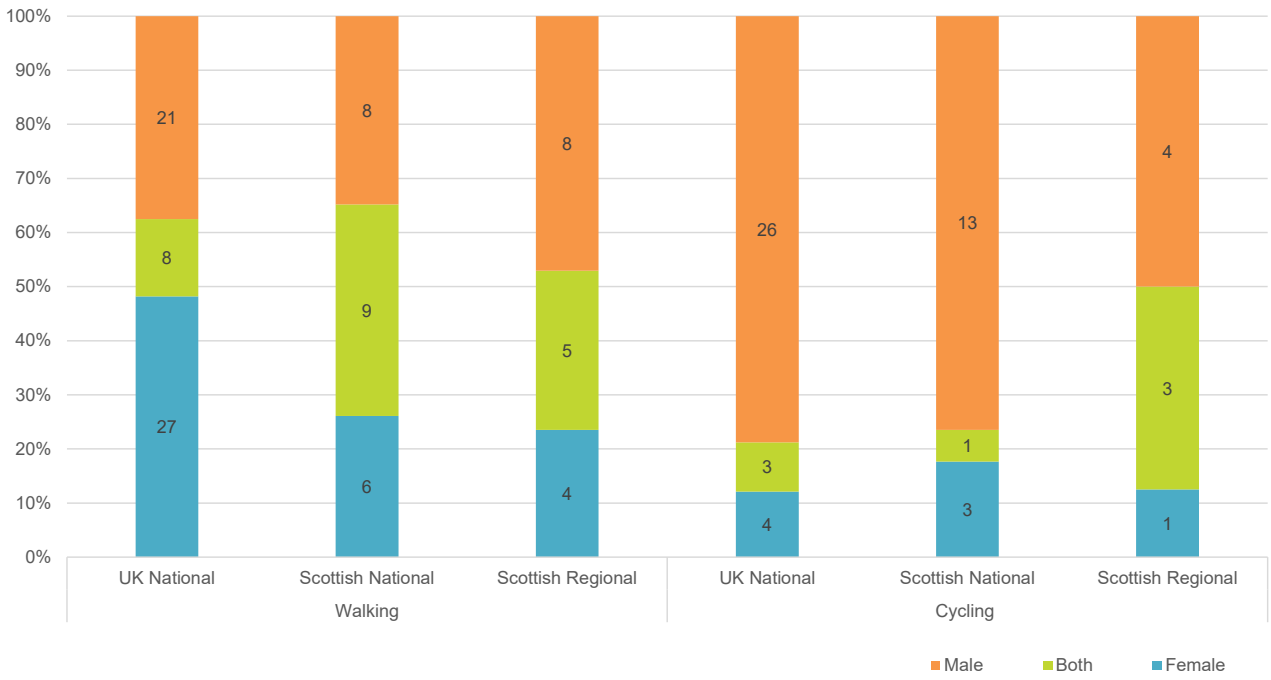## Chart 5-3 Article Image use by Gender, Mode and Tier (n=154)

Walking | Cycling

Male | Both | Female

Chart 5-4 Articles with Images by Theme and Gender

Female | Both | Male
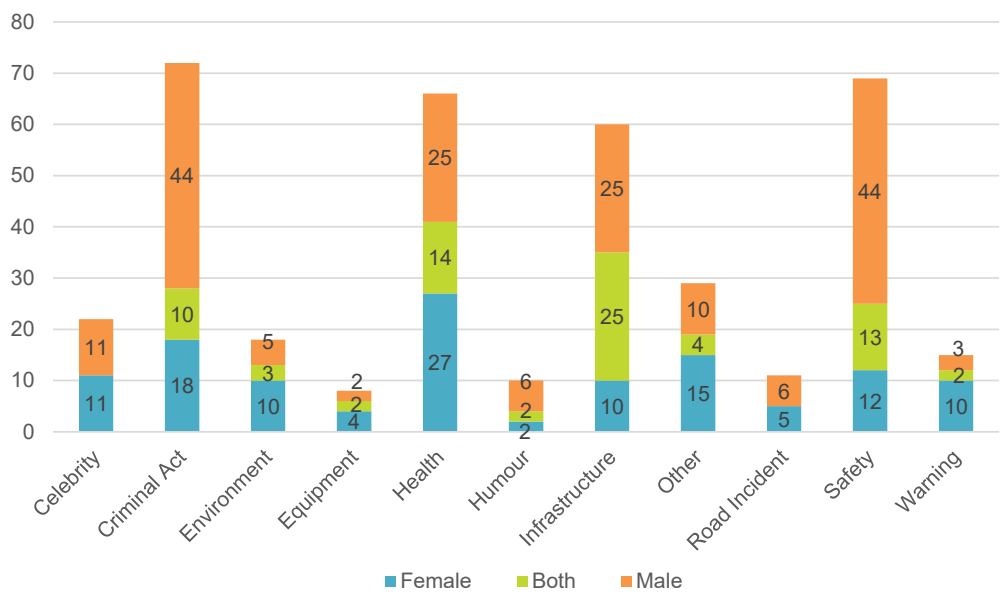
Chart 5-5 Articles Images by Mode, Theme and Gender

Cycling | Walking

Male | Both | Female
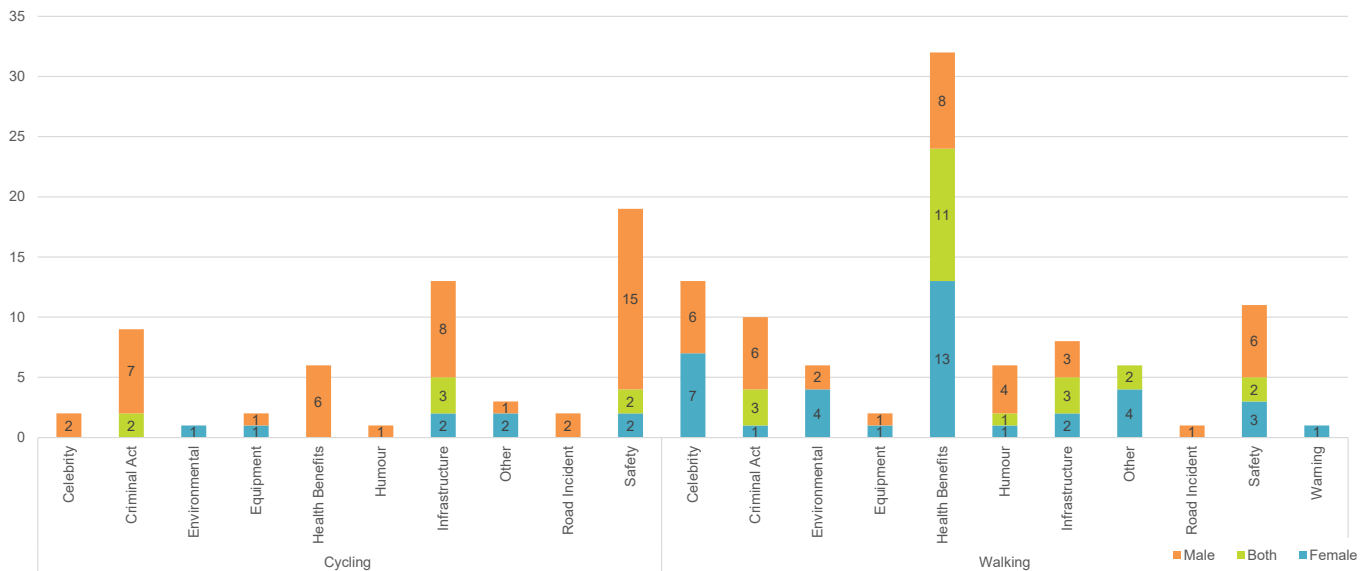
It is not only important to look at who is portrayed, but also *how* they are portrayed. One aspect of this analysis was exploring whether people in images of active travel are portrayed as being 'active' or 'passive'. Historically in media sources, men are more likely to have been portrayed as active, associated with the socially constructed masculine attributes of being assertive, adventurous and dominant (Gauntlett, 2008). Women, conversely, have been historically portrayed as passive rather than engaged in activity, bound up within socially constructed feminine attributes of being submissive or weak. In addition to this, women are often represented in the media through the 'male gaze', often portrayed in highly sexualised or sexist imagery (see also Laker, 2016).

From the images analysed for this study, men were more likely to be portrayed as active than women. In images showing only men or women, and portraying active travel, men are active in 75% of the images, while women are represented actively in 58% of images. These figures are consistent when broken down by walking and cycling. Chart 5-6 shows how men are similar between walking and cycling articles. While there are a similar number of articles featuring "active" women walking as men, there are also a higher number and proportion of articles portraying women as passive. Furthermore, the low number of articles portraying women cycling, and the higher proportion of these that portray women as passive, validates the argument that there is an issue with women's representation when it comes to cycling (see e.g. Laker, 2016). It also corroborates with findings from Sustrans research into barriers to women cycling, in which the image and constructions of femity in public space, particularly relating to concerns surrounding societal expectations as to how women "should look" were a key barrier to more women cycling (Sustrans, 2018).

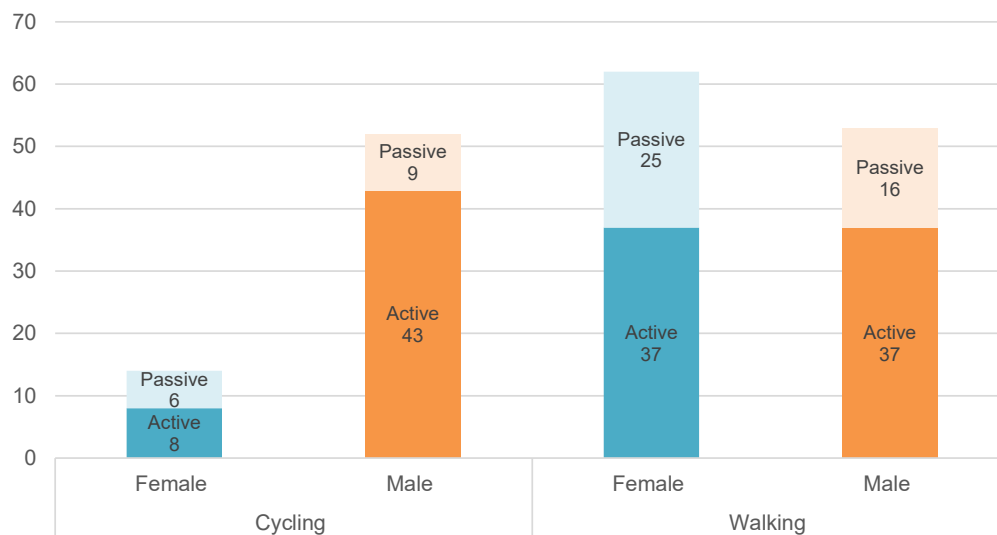### Chart 5-6 Article Images by Mode, Gender and Active/Passive

Cycling — Female: Active 8, Passive 6; Male: Active 43, Passive 9
Walking — Female: Active 37, Passive 25; Male: Active 37, Passive 16

Figure 21 & 22. Men were more likely to be portrayed as "active" in cycling imagery. *Images: BBC News, 02/06/17, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-nottinghamshire-40117352; Border Telegraph, 05/05/17, https://www.bordertelegraph.com/news/15266190.Women_s_cycling_and_clothing_store_to_open_in_Innerleithen/*

Further analysis highlights that the disparity between portrayals of active men and women may be greater than the data initially suggests. The images below are all in the same article, with two images of passive women on foot and one image of a male cyclist. However, this article is coded as both genders, method of travel is 'other' and both active and passive. A greater breakdown of the images could help to better understand these issues.

Figure 22, 23 & 24. Additional analysis of images further revealed images of women as passive and/or inactive compared with men. *Mail Online, 28/06/17, http://www. dailymail.co.uk/health/article-4644382/Stop-stress-eating-walking-making-playlist.html*

5.2 Age

- Older and younger people underrepresented in images of active travel
- This is also exaggerated in images of cycling compared with walking

How and whether people of different ages are represented is important. In the UK, possibly linked to arguments that highlight cycling as a childish activity, older people are significantly less likely to cycle than younger adults (Aldred et al, 2016). Similarly, in Edinburgh, the proportion of younger adults cycling significantly outweighs the proportion of older people (Bike Life Edinburgh, 2017). In Glasgow, Stirling and Perth at least 50% of cyclists are 34 and under, and 41% of cyclists in Stirling are 24 and under (Bike Life, 2018).

Images of 18-30 and 31-45 year olds represent over half (66%) of the articles that use images of individuals travelling actively (Chart 5-6). Alternatively, images referring to children (11%) and the older population (4%) are used less, with less than one in six articles reflecting these age groups.

Chart 5-7 Article Image Use by Age (n=161)

| Under 17 11% | 18-30 27% | 31-45 40% | 46-64 18% | 65+ 4% |

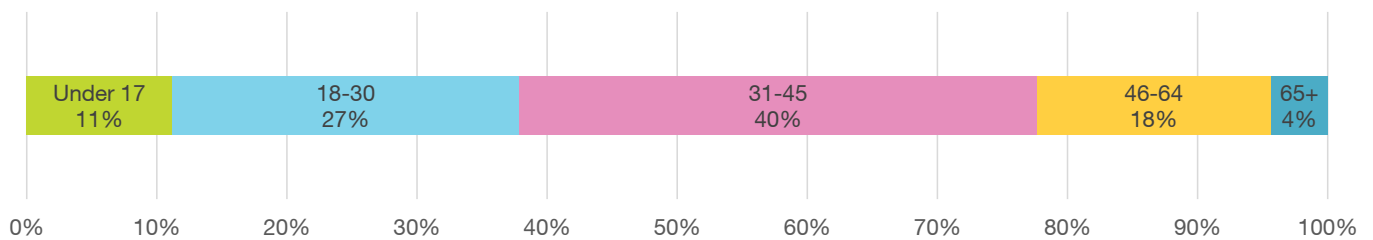0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Figure 25. Articles rarely used images of older people. *Mail Online, 30/06/17, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-4654622/Walking-slower-early-sign-cognitive-decline.html*

When splitting this into the two methods of active travel, cycling and walking, it is evident that cycling articles generally use images of individuals in the 18-30 and 31-45 year old age brackets (Chart 5-7). This is 17 percentage points lower in comparison to walking articles (59%) with images of adults in the 46-64 year old age bracket being used more often (26% walking, 9% cycling). Interestingly, whilst 2% of cycling articles with images refer to 65+ year olds, this group is three times larger for walking articles (6%). This therefore may refer to the perception that whilst walking is perceived to be for all ages, cycling is focused more as an adult activity but not for those older in age.

Despite some arguments that cycling is commonly portrayed as a children's activity (e.g. Furness, 2010), this did not come through from this analysis. While there is clearly a slight preference for showing younger people cycling, the proportion of Under 17s represented doing each activity is small.

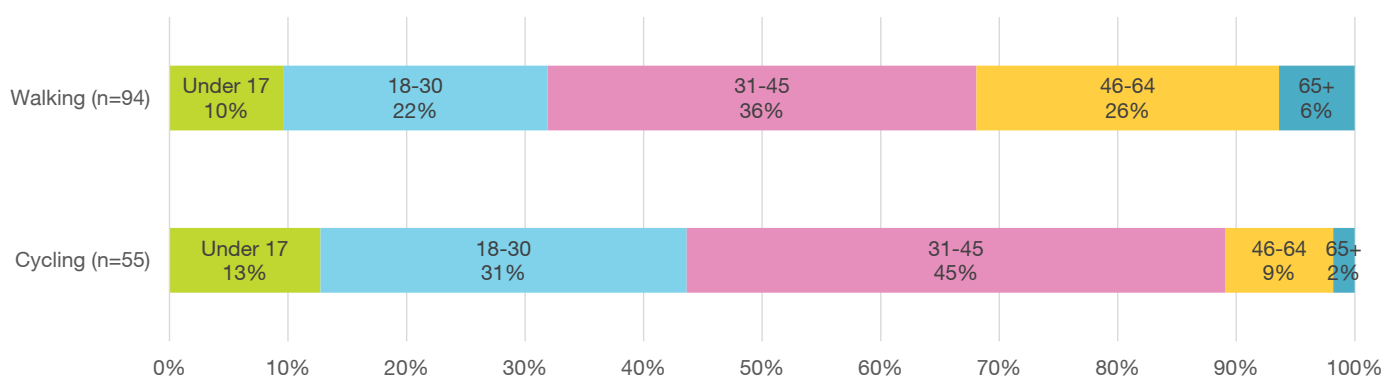## Chart 5-8 Article Image Use by Age and Mode (n=149)

Mode	Under 17	18-30	31-45	46-64	65+
Walking (n=94)	10%	22%	36%	26%	6%
Cycling (n=55)	13%	31%	45%	9%	2%

One elderly cyclist said he had the body fat of a 19-year-old

Figure 26. Images of older people cycling were very uncommon. This is unlikely to encourage older people to start cycling. *BBCnews, 12/03/18, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-43308729*
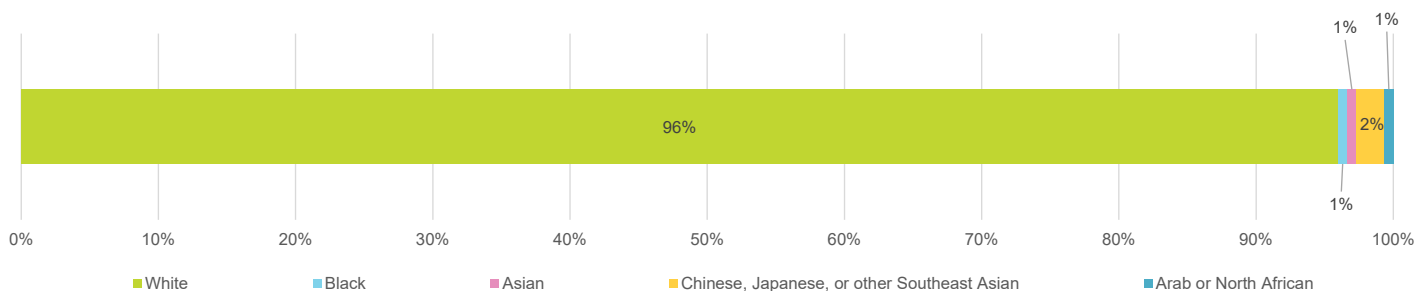
5.3 Ethnicity

- Active travel overwhelmingly portrayed as white. Images of BAME individuals participating in active travel rare.
- Not a single image in the article sample showing a BAME individual cycling in a UK context

In her book 'Bike Lanes are White Lanes', academic Melody Hoffman highlights the stark demographic divide in cycling mobilities within US cities, exploring the reasons why cycling is an overwhelmingly white practice (Hoffman, 2016). In a UK context, London's walking and cycling commissioner, Will Norman, has publically stated that cycling is "too white" and that the number of Black, Asian and other minority ethnic (BAME) groups cycling is not nearly as high as its potential (Batchelor, 2018). In Edinburgh, the proportion of people identifying as BAME who cycle (3%) is significantly less than the city population (8%) (Bike Life Edinburgh, 2017).

In articles about active travel, there is a significant over-representation of images of white people, while BAME individuals remain very under-represented. Chart 5-9 shows the proportion of each ethnicity represented in images of individuals actively travelling. 96.0% of articles use images of individuals that readers would likely identify as white. This is higher than the 2011 England and Wales census in which 86.0% of the population regard themselves as White. As a result, ethnic minorities, including Asian (0.7% reported, 7.5% census), Black (0.7% reported, 3.3% census), Arab or North African (0.7% reported, 1.0% census) are underrepresented throughout the articles.

Chart 5-9 Image by likely ethnicity (n=154)

Legend: White, Black, Asian, Chinese, Japanese, or other Southeast Asian, Arab or North African
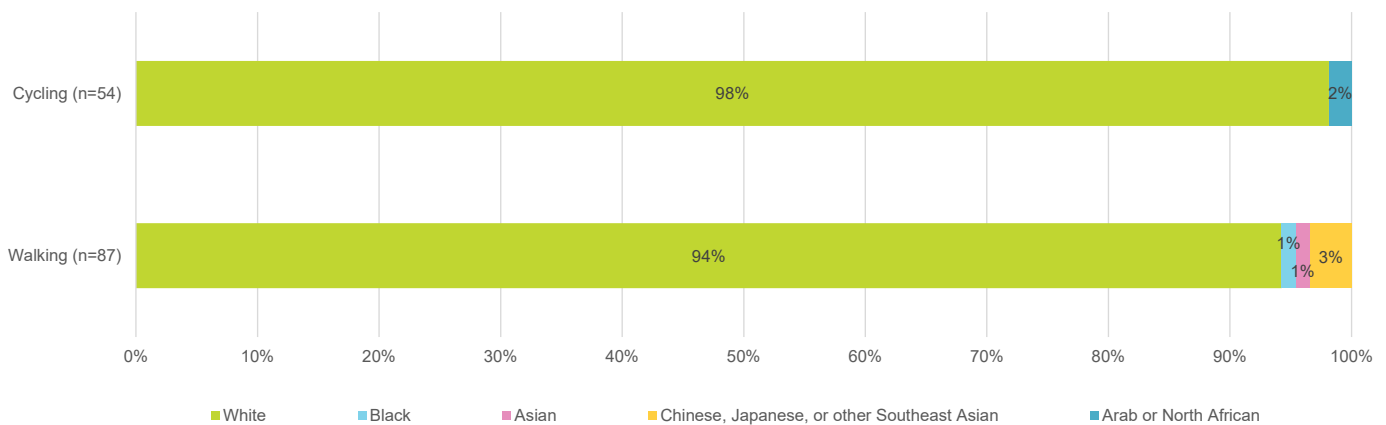
When looking at image use by ethnicity and mode of active travel, images of white individuals actively cycling are predominantly used, whilst images relating to actively walking feature a larger percentage and scope of ethnic minorities (Chart 5-10), albeit still underrepresenting BAME groups. Significantly, some of the images here are included because the article is about that individual (Figure 27). Further analysis could include explore just stock photos in order to ascertain whether the issue with underrepresentation lies with the availability of stock imagery or editorial choices.

Figure 27. A number of images featuring people from BAME groups focus on an individual. *The Courier, 11/05/17, https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/local/dundee/424515/dundee-man-jailed-atrocious-driving-pavement-outside-school/*

Chart 5-10 Image use by ethnicity and active mode (n=143)

Cycling (n=54): White 98%, Arab or North African 2%

Walking (n=87): White 94%, Black 1%, Asian 1%, Chinese, Japanese, or other Southeast Asian 3%

Legend: ■ White ■ Black ■ Asian ■ Chinese, Japanese, or other Southeast Asian ■ Arab or North African

Articles featuring cycling show a particularly low representation of BAME individuals. 53 of the 54 articles that refer to an image of an individual actively cycling are likely to be identified as white. The only cycling article that uses an image of anyone non-white cycling refers to Iranian women cycling in protest against fatwa banning them from cycling (Figure 28). This article on cycling in Iran highlights how cycling and active travel can have different meanings and be attributed different cultural values across time and space. The fact that this article is in about Iran is also significant. Out of 600 articles about or featuring active travel, there is not a single article that shows a person cycling in a UK context who would likely be identified as BAME. This highlights a real need for better representation within media articles about cycling if advocates for cycling are going to increase diversity within cycling.

The underrepresentation of BAME groups in the media, as well as the mis-representation of BAME groups, is an issue tied up with broader issues of a lack of diversity within the media (see Thrasher, 2017). As such, it is important that advocates, such as Sustrans, are particularly sensitive to this issue and ensure that our publications and other outputs are representative of the cities we work in.

Figure 28. Images of BAME individuals cycling were very rare. There were no images sampled that showed a person cycling in a UK context that would likely identify as BAME. *Independent, 13/06/17, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/iran-women-defy-cycling-fatwa-tehran-religious-prohibitions-rights-traffic-a7787876.html*

Case Study II: Vulnerability and disconnection

In addition to portraying (or not portraying) different groups of people, our analysis also explored the types of images commonly used when portraying active travel. As discussed, active travel does not occur in a vacuum but rather people make sense of it through broader social and cultural lenses – lenses which are shaped and influenced by media representations (Hartley, 2011). These images highlight how the types of images used to portray active travel can add an additional negative slant to the article, through making proponents appear vulnerable. In doing this, they are unlikely to encourage active travel or for people to see active travel as positive.

A number of articles portrayed people engaged in active travel as particularly vulnerable. This is not necessarily linked to article content but rather, location, camera angle   and content can all portray individuals as at risk. This is particularly important when one considers that "safety" is a key barrier to people travelling actively and the prevalence of articles featuring criminal acts and safety issues.

Figures 29 and 30 are examples of images that emphasise the vulnerability of people walking and both used to accompany negative articles. The reasons these images portray people walking as particularly vulnerable include:

- They portray a solitary individual. This is augmented by the fact that both images appear to portray women, with figure 29 possibly portraying a school girl. These are typically seen as more vulnerable.

- They are "off the beaten track". In British culture woodlands are often portrayed as "dangerous places" in film, TV and literature and shown as places where attacks or murders take place.

- They are taken from a "voyeuristic angle". The angle of the photograph makes it appear that the people in the images are unaware that they are being photographed. At best, such images disconnect viewers from the people in the image. On a more negative level, such images portray a "stalkers eye view" that makes the people in the image feel like victims to be – a trope commonly used in film and TV. This also links to previous points made surrounding the use of CCTV images.

The voyeuristic angle is used often in media images of active travel, even when the article is positive (Figure 31). This is likely to be because they give an impression of being "natural" and less posed, creating greater authenticity. However, these images are unlikely to encourage people to take up active travel.

Figure 29: *Mail Online, 19/03/17, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-4329396/ls-just-going-walk-utterly-pointless.html*

Figure 30: *Border Telegraph, 07/04/17, http://www.bordertelegraph.com/news/15211016.Dog_owners_alerted_after_case_of_Alabama_Rot_recorded_in_the_South_of_Scotland/*

Figure 31: *Aberdeen Evening Express, 19/02/18, https://www.eveningexpress.co.uk/news/short-bouts-of-exercise-could-help-reduce-premature-death-in-older-men-study*

Linked to the voyeuristic image is the image that omit people's faces, showing just the lower body of a person engaged in active travel (Figures 32 & 33). While such images do not necessarily portray individuals as vulnerable, they do not represent active travel as particularly positive. On the surface, such images can come across as relatively neutral, however the absence of faces reduces any sense of engagement and humanness the images could convey. The face is seen as the source of emotion and empathy, without which readers are less likely to positively engage with these images. This is particularly important when it comes to encouraging people to take up active travel, as people are much more likely to change their behaviour if they see "people like them" doing it.

As with isolated places, like woodland, images of active travel occurring in darkness tend to evoke negative perceptions due to its associations with the unknown and threats to the person. A number of articles showed night time scenes or people in dark places (Figures 34 & 35) and do not portray active travel in a positive light.

Finally, numerous articles also showed people engaged in active travel on or alongside traffic and busy roads (Figures 34 & 36). Such images are likely to invoke a negative sense of affect because they highlight people walking and cycling as particularly vulnerable and threatened by traffic. They also often emphasise that these forms of transport are secondary to motorised traffic, as well as often being simply unpleasant, polluted places to be.

Figure 32: *The Herald, 30/08/18, http://www.heraldscotland.com/ news/15501795.Edinburgh_Trams__Cyclists_to_get_dedicated_ lanes_on_new_line/*

Figure 33: *The Daily Record, 13/05/17, https://www.dailyrecord. co.uk/news/local-news/west-lothian-walking-groups- encourage-10407047*

Figure 34: *The Herald, 24/06/17, http://www.heraldscotland.com/ news/15368970.City_centre_cops_crackdown_on_thieves_who_ are_using_bolt_cutters_to_STEAL_bikes/#gallery10*

Figure 35: *The Herald, 15/03/18, http://www.heraldscotland.com/ news/16086565.Will_tram_track_revamp_save_lives_-_you_decide/*

Figure 36: *Border Telegraph, 07/09/17, http://www. bordertelegraph.com/news/15517958.MP_backs_call_for_lower_ speed_limit_at_Halbeath__death_trap_/*

6. Conclusions

6.1 Key findings

- Articles that feature walking outweigh articles that feature cycling by about 2 to 1
  - The proportion of articles varies between publications and tiers
  - Article numbers are relatively consistent throughout the year, with a slight peak in June and a dip in November and December

- The most dominant theme is "Criminal Act" which features significantly more articles featuring walking than cycling
  - This is followed by "Infrastructure" which is the most dominant theme for articles featuring cycling
  - "Safety" is the third most common theme followed by "Health benefits"

Sentiment

- Nearly two thirds of articles frame active travel negatively
  - Tabloid newspapers particularly negative towards active travel
  - Scottish national and regional publications generally more favourable towards cycling than UK national publications
  - No clear pattern of positive or negative sentiments towards active travel throughout the year
  - A clear spike in negative cycling articles in September 2017 – likely to be linked to Charlie Alliston's trial

- The most common negative article themes are "Criminal Act" and "Safety" while "Environment", "Road incident/collision" and "Warning" all have high proportion of negative sentiment
  - Such themes are unlikely to encourage people to take up active travel, regardless of editorial stance on walking and cycling.
  - Overrepresentation of articles about cycling featuring road incidents or collisions.

- "Health benefits" is the theme with the highest proportion of positive articles, while "Infrastructure" has a high number of positive articles. "Celebrity", "Humour" and "Equipment" all also have high proportion of positive articles

Representation

- Women are underrepresented and men are overrepresented in imagery of active travel
  - This is more exaggerated in images of cycling than walking
  - Women are also more likely to be shown as "passive" rather than "active" in images

- Older and younger people underrepresented in images of active travel
  - This is also exaggerated in images of cycling compared with walking

- Active travel overwhelmingly portrayed as white. Images of BAME groups participating in active travel rare.
  - Not a single image of a person of colour cycling in a UK context

Images

- The use of dashcam and CCTV footage is likely to increase fears of walking and cycling
- The angle and style of imagery used to portray active travel can also serve to disconnect people from active travel and increase the perception that it is not safe.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings in this report, active travel advocates could take a number of action points:

- To continue to highlight the positive aspects of active travel on their websites and contribute to news sources that show active travel in a positive light.

- In light of findings that show that active travel is often reported on in the context of a safety issue or criminal activity, advocates could build on its current work that seeks to counter the assertion that walking and cycling are particularly unsafe.

- Based on the findings that highlight that articles featuring celebrities show active travel in a generally positive light and that such articles serve to normalise walking and cycling, advocates could explore options for working with famous people.

- This research has highlighted that most imagery accompanying articles about active travel does not show a diverse range of people engaged in active travel, nor portray it as a normal, safe, everyday activity. While at times this may be an editorial decision, this may also be due to there being limited images available on stock photo archives. Active travel advocates that have produced more positive imagery could explore the possibility of making a range of their images of active travel available to stock photo archives and media publishers.

6.3 Further research

This report highlights some of the key topline findings from this research. It highlights some of the principal results, however further research could be done to help us better understand the complex phenomena of representations of active travel in the media. The following points are a few areas within which further research could be done:

- **Safety**: Safety was a major theme to emerge from this research. This report only touches on some of the main issues, with a small amount of qualitative analysis of sources. This theme could be explored in much greater detail – particularly undertaking discourse analysis of certain articles - to reveal its specificities, complexities and nuances. We could also look deeper into how these situations are represented, the type of language used and whether this varies for incidents involving cars, bikes and/or pedestrians. This would give us a greater understanding of safety issues, how the media portrays active as unsafe, and put us in a better position to counter the idea that active travel is particularly dangerous.

- **Who is represented**: This report explored representation at a fairly basic level, focusing mostly on quantitative data. Further research could explore how different groups travelling actively are represented within the media, with discourse analyse of images providing deeper insight into this area – particularly exploring the nature of images of different groups. Once again, through gaining a better understanding as to how and why different groups are portrayed differently, we would be put in a better position to counter such representation, and recommend how to improve representation of people in such articles.

- **Tiers**: This research explored differences between different geographical tiers of media sources: UK national, Scottish national and Scottish regional. We were unable to go into great detail into analysing the different tiers. Further research could explore the differences between different tiers and geographies, with emphasis on different policy contexts over a longer time frame, to provide further insights into how and whether this has an impact on how active travel is represented.

7. Appendices

Appendix A - References

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Appendix B: In/out of scope

Articles on the subject of active travel were searched for using the terms of 'walking' and 'cycling'. As these are very broad terms they needed to be refined with additional criteria and search terms.

Active travel consists of using walking, cycling and other means that require physical activity to get from A to B, either as an 'everyday' journey, or as a leisure pursuit. This is in contrast to travelling for sporting or competitive purposes.

As such, all searches that included competitive sport were omitted. This was particularly relevant for professional cycling.

Journeys were split into two different types:

• Essential journeys: These consist of the everyday journeys that people make on a regular basis (albeit not necessarily every day). These can include, but were not limited to, the school run, commuting to work, travelling to the shops etc.

• Leisure journeys: These journeys are defined as non-essential, more recreational journeys that people do for pleasure. These included visiting sites of local interest, recreational walking or cycling, and dog walking (although this may be considered an essential journey too). In this instance, the act of walking and cycling is not a means to an end, but an enjoyable experience in and of itself.

Importantly, we did not include articles made for holidays (such as walking holidays or long distance cycle tours). This was because we were mostly interested in walking and cycling as an everyday activity. By its definition, a holiday is outside of the everyday.

In addition to these parameters, some key words were added to search terms. These were refined from previous searches on the subject of walking and cycling to exclude less relevant articles:

Frequently associated key terms included with 'cycling':	Frequently associated key terms included with 'walking:
- Cyclist	- Pedestrian
- Health	- Health
- Safety	- Crime
- Celebrity	- To work
- Bike	- To school
- Injury	- To the shops
- Weather	- Dog
- Risk	- Weather
- Danger	- Strollers
- Road	- Witness
- Witness	- Transport Scotland
- Cycle to school	
- Cycle to work	
- Transport Scotland	

Terms considered out of scope include:
- Sport
- Holiday
- Charity cycle
- Recycling
- Spin class
- "Walking Dead"
- "Walking with dinosaurs"
- Dead man/woman walking
- Fire walking
- Holiday
- Charity walk
- "walking out on someone"
- Walking football

Appendix C: Category themes

Article themes were categorised by the dominant theme, defined as follows:

Criminal Act – the article focuses on a crime, in most instances perpetrated against or by someone walking or cycling, or someone walking or cycling witnessing a crime.

Infrastructure – the article focuses on the physical infrastructure related to walking and cycling

Safety – the article focuses on safety, either of individuals or of a piece of infrastructure. Often, this category used an event or example of something unsafe to make a broader point about safety in general.

Health benefits – the article focuses on the health benefits of active travel. This may refer to either physical or mental health. It also could refer to either a case study of an individual, make broader points about potential benefits for individuals, or broader benefits and savings for health services.

Environment – the article focuses on the environment. These includes local issues such as air pollution, and global issues such as climate change. It also includes broader environment features, such inclement or extreme weather – such as the "beast form the East" and other storms etc.

Road incident/Collision – the article focuses on an incident on the road, in which the focus of the article is on the incident itself, rather than "safety" or a "criminal act". Note that initially coders had put this category as "road accident" which was amended to fit with current style guidelines surrounding this in which "accident" is thought to imply that road incidents are a matter of chance without culpability.

Warning – An article strongly linked to "safety" but with more of a focus on warning the public about a specific hazard - e.g. "Walkers warned over dangers of cows in fields with calves"

Celebrity – the article focuses on the actions of a celebrity or well-known individual. Generally the article features a celebrity partaking in active travel. This may be specifically an article focused on active travel, or is on another subject within which the celebrity happens to be participating in active travel.

Humour – the article is humourous featuring an unusual and/or whimsical subject matter that also includes walking or cycling. This may be about people walking or cycling, or it may be something that someone has encountered while out walking or cycling.

Equipment - the article focuses on specialist equipment for walking or cycling.

Other – the article does not feature any of the themes above.

As with many of the themes, there was a lot of overlap with other categories. In instances where two or more themes were present, the theme was chosen based on which most dominates the article. This was decided by an expert media analyst from The Answer.

Appendix D: The Charlie Alliston case

In February 2016, Charlie Alliston, riding on a fixed gear bike, collided with pedestrian Kim Briggs on Old Street, east London. The impact resulted in Briggs suffering "catastrophic" head injuries, and she tragically died in hospital a week later. Alliston's bike was not legal to ride on the road and, while cleared of manslaughter, in September 2017 he was found guilty of causing bodily harm by "wanton and furious driving" and sentenced to 18 months in prison. Throughout the trial, emphasis was placed on Alliston's apparent lack of remorse and perceived aggressive cycling style – factors highlighted by the sentencing judge.

The case received a high level of media interest in comparison to other road collisions, and prompted the Department for Transport to undertake a public consultation on cycling offences, which included a proposal to create the offences of causing death or serious injury by careless or dangerous cycling following calls by Briggs' widower, commentators and politicians.

The high profile nature of the case and proposed changes to the law was met with some concern by cycling advocates and road justice campaigners. While overwhelmingly sympathetic to the Briggs family and agreeing that Alliston must be held account for his behaviour, these groups raised concerns regarding coverage surrounding the incident, the language used to describe the incident, and the demonising of cyclists more broadly (see e.g. Cycling UK, 2017; Walker, 2017a; Windsor, 2017).

While not opposed to a review of the legislation governing cycling offences in principle, these groups argued that the outlined proposals for the creation of new cycling offences were a disproportionate response to the incident, when 99% of pedestrian collision deaths in the UK involved motorised vehicles, and that the proposed legislation was based on fundamentally flawed definitions of "dangerous" and careless" driving. They argued that the government should consider cycling offences as part of a wider review of road traffic offences by the Ministry of Justice in order to ensure that the justice system is able to deal appropriately and consistently with careless and deliberately dangerous behaviour by all road users (Cycling UK, 2018; Sustrans, 2018).

Appendix E: The Answer

The Answer are data analysts specialising in commercial semiotics with a team of experienced data analysts and semiotics experts. Due to their expertise in analysing consumer trends, cultural values and the media landscape, The Answer led on the selection of articles featuring active travel through an innovative methodology to ensure that articles selected were representative. Following this they led on the analysis and coding of articles. For further information on The Answer see:

https://www.theanswerinsight.com/

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